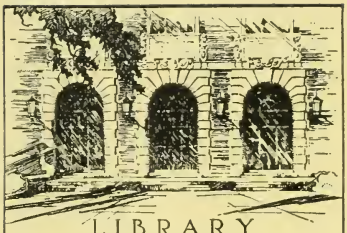

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS
823
St79m
v.3

A MAN'S FOES

A MAN'S FOES.

BY

E. H. STRAIN.

'A man's foes shall be they of his own household.'

VOL. III.

LONDON:
WARD, LOCK & BOWDEN, LIMITED,
WARWICK HOUSE, SALISBURY SQUARE, E.C.
NEW YORK AND MELBOURNE.
1895.
[*All rights reserved.*]

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2010 with funding from
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

http://www.archive.org/details/mansfoes03stra

823
St79m
v. 3

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXX.	A TRAITOR'S REVENGE	1
XXXI.	AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR	14
XXXII.	THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL HILL	32
XXXIII.	THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL HILL —THE ENGLISH SHIPS	49
XXXIV.	TROUBLES THICKEN	65
XXXV.	MARSHAL VON ROSEN'S DEVICE	77
XXXVI.	THE RESULT OF VON ROSEN'S STRATAGEM	96
XXXVII.	A WELCOME MESSENGER	109
XXXVIII.	A RIOT, AND A GREAT MISFORTUNE	119
XXXIX.	DARKNESS AND DAWN	138
XL.	RELATES THE BEGINNING OF A DANGEROUS EXPEDITION	148
XLI.	A FRIEND IN NEED	161
XLII.	HOW MRS. HAMILTON FELL IN WITH ONE FRIEND AND TWO FOES	175
XLIII.	HOW MRS. HAMILTON RETURNED TO THE CITY	193

CHAPTER		PAGE
XLIV.	WHAT BECAME OF THE STRAWBERRIES .	209
XLV.	GATHERING GLOOM	220
XLVI.	TELLS HOW MRS. HAMILTON ATTENDED A MEETING OF COUNCIL . . .	227
XLVII.	THE COST OF CONSTANCY . . .	240
XLVIII.	A BITTER CHOICE	257
XLIX.	THE LAST SUNDAY	266
L.	LIFE, AND TRUTH, AND VICTORY . .	278

A MAN'S FOES

CHAPTER XXX.

A TRAITOR'S REVENGE.

ANOTHER strange thing, and one that since hath often set me musing, was this : how many times my differences with Mr. Hewson were followed by some pain or trouble to myself. That this was what some that wished me very well would fain have had me take it for, I could never believe (to wit, a kind of punishment for my contumacy, or warning to accept his guidance in the future), not finding his sayings of that quality that seemed to me to deserve Divine confirmation. As I said to Rosa more than once, it might be a sequel to, but was no consequence of, these arguments.

In this case, the trouble followed hard upon the heels of the contention. The next morning Mr. Walker, passing our house, desired to see

me, and delivered to me a letter that he said had been entrusted to him by Colonel Lundy for my reading, and afterwards to be destroyed.

'And sure,' said he, 'it must contain news of the first importance, when he could think of it at a moment so engrossing as that of his own escape.'

So did I think, though that the news was good by no means followed, when I considered what passages of antagonism had taken place between us more than once. He had professed to think these excusable, and even praiseworthy in my circumstances; but then, what faith could be put in any word of Lundy's? And so with some qualms I unfolded the letter.

The beginning was gone from it, and so was the signature; but the name of a friend caught my eye at the first glance, and after that I wasted no time in wondering who it came from. Thus, or something thus, the fragment ran:

'Concerning the Lord Viscount Mountjoy, about whom you make inquiry, his mission hath highly displeased the King of England; who indeed had little favour for him before his coming, owing to what he hath learnt of his Protestant leanings and seditious practices. 'Tis true enough that he is thrown into the Bastille; have you any yearnings to hear that he is set at large again? If you had, I should be much surprised, though, after all, he is an old

comrade of yours, and no doubt you owe him some friendship.

'Another friend of yours is come to us out of Ireland—through England, like so many good things—one James Hamilton, that was formerly, like yourself, an officer of Mountjoy's, and, by what I hear, hand and glove with his Colonel. I am credibly informed he came to the King with powers from the P. of O. to treat for the release of that lord, if either ransom or exchange would do it. The late Lord Chancellor, they say, was offered for him. But Hamilton either came to the King at an ill time, or else he managed his embassy amiss, for he is clapt up in the same prison with his friend. 'Twill be some time, I judge, before either of them sets foot in Ireland again.'

There was more of the letter, but all about indifferent things and persons. To the part I have written down I came back, and read it again and again, till I had it by heart. Then I gave it back to Mr. Walker, to be destroyed, according to his promise.

'I take leave to hope, madam,' quoth he, 'that your news is good.'

''Tis—*mixed*,' I told him. Sure, I had reason to call it so, at least, because of the good hope it gave me that Captain Hamilton was no deserter after all, but had King William's

authority for giving over his trust to his cousin. I had reason, I say, to think it so, and to call it so ; but the name of the Bastille hath such terror in it, that it thrust the rest out of sight. There was that in my voice that brought Rosa to my side with her quick 'What's amiss?' and her anxious, loving eyes, that compelled an answer.

'There can be no breach of confidence in telling you my part of it,' said I slowly, for I had rather have kept it to myself, dreading, foolishly enough, the sound of a thing so horrible. 'The writer of the letter—Lundy hath cut away his name—confirms the rumour that my Lord Mountjoy is cast into the Bastille.'

'That's no news,' interrupted Mr. Walker. 'We have known that for a fact this great while. Lundy did not send you the letter to assure you of that.'

'No,' I returned ; 'he did not. 'The thing he desires I should know '—for all my efforts, I could not keep my voice controlled and steady, and its shaking angered me at mine own weakness—'the thing he desires I should know is that Captain Hamilton shares his prison.'

'Is thrown into the Bastille along with him?' said Rosa, with blanching face.

'Into the Bastille, yes,' I replied, and sat me down upon a chair, looking straight before me, but seeing nothing.

'Oh, Mary!' she cried, throwing her arms about me, 'how could you say it was *mixed?*'

In truth, every corner of my mind was engaged in putting the same question.

'This is Lundy's revenge,' said Rosa, 'for what you did to him at Cloncally. He durst not strike a woman with his hand for fear of men's tongues, so he took this crafty, mock-kindly way to deal you a crueller blow—the coward!'

So he was; for that was what he intended, past a doubt; not knowing that with the evil tidings he was sending me some of such value that it was very nearly salve to the blow.

Wamphray came bursting into the room, flushed, and waving his hands for some gladness.

'Rejoice, rejoice!' he cried; 'rejoice for the first earnest of our victory! King James hath quitted his army. He is off to Dublin at the top speed of his horses. The first discharge of our artillery hath sent him scampering out of hearing of it, like a hill pony. But what on earth's amiss?' he ended, looking from one to another of us in wonder.

Rosa began to weep. And I—what in the name of all marvels think you that I did? I broke out laughing; 'tis the truth. I sat there upon my chair, and laughed as though my husband's captivity were the best of jests. They looked

at me as though they thought me crazy. I fell to wondering if I was.

The shouting of the people came to our ears from the Diamond. I cared not for it a single straw. If it had been a public lamentation, it had moved me just as little. I, that the day before had been so wrapped up in the public affairs, that even my little son had scarce been able to distract my thoughts from them, was now as callous to them as if they had been the battles of the gods upon Olympus, or of the Pigmies with the Cranes. That day I verily think the walls might have been breached, that King James might march over them in triumph, or the market-house have been turned into King William's throne-room, and I would not have troubled to lift my head to see either the one thing or the other.

After this a kind of numbness grew upon me, though I strove against it with all my power. 'Twas a kind of mist that arose before my mind—a kind of muffling round my feeling of things. Even the children were powerless to penetrate it. I occupied myself very much with them—more than was my custom; for being together, they were happy, and throve and played as I had never seen them do before. No one could help taking pleasure to see that, but the pleasure was something apart

from myself; that I knew, but could not feel. I forced myself to join in their games, but even their baby wits were not deceived by my gaiety. They would break off in the midst of their diversions to ask what ailed me; they would climb upon my lap, and bid me cheer up when I was laughing with all the mirth I could counterfeit. Had their elders done the like, I am certain my wits had left me; but with them I armed myself with a pretence of calmness that did but increase my apathy.

The business of the defence that the town was full of; the placing of the guns to the best advantage; the appointing to each regiment of its post in case of attack, and of its duties in case of a sally;—sure, the day before they had been meat and drink to me; this day they were but a weariness. And on the next, though I went like all the rest that could find room to the cathedral, and heard Mr. Walker preach his great sermon from the text 'Our help is in the Lord, that made heaven and earth,' which stirred the hearts of his hearers like a trumpet, I cared nothing for it. It passed in at one ear and out at the other at the time; but, sure, there must have been some kind of net in my head that caught the sense of it, for as I write I can bring back both the picture and the words;—how he first laid bare

to us our forlorn condition and our weakness, so that it seemed as though the task were clean beyond our strength, and the people's faces began to be dashed with doubt and misgiving; and then rose upon a wind of prophecy, and showed how the city's cause was God's as well, and how the might of our foes was a thing beneath contempt, not fit to be reckoned up or put in the balance, with His aid to back us. All that heard that sermon—save one—went out of the cathedral as though they trod on air, and with a consciousness of power upon them that was a foretaste of victory. For the one, poor creature! she was so far gone in languor of mind that she scarce could muster up the interest to wonder at the rest.

Mr. Walker—or God Almighty speaking by his mouth—had not kindled this fire of valour to let it burn away into ashes to no purpose. What is that I have heard Captain Hamilton quote?—that 'spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues.' It was proved true this same afternoon.

For now the investiture was complete; now the siege was fairly opened. The enemy had been playing a gun upon us all the morning; with small effect, either on the spirits or the property of the townsmen. Instead of driving them from the walls, it drew them there; so

that they saw a party of the enemy taking their way towards Pennyburn and Brookhall, no doubt with intent to pass these places and attack Culmore.

I know not but that, in the state of their temper, the mere sight of a detached party of manageable numbers had been a temptation to them. Certes, that and the thought of good service to their friends at Culmore together was one they could not resist. A sally was no sooner proposed than 'twas agreed to, and scarce agreed to than 'twas put in execution. The hedges between the Ship-quay Gate and Pennyburn Mill were lined with some of our foot, to the number of near five hundred, in a marvellous short space of time, while the horse, under Adam's command, endeavoured to intercept and cut off the attacking party ; 'twas divided into two squadrons, of which he led the first, while the second or reserve followed him under command of Major Bull. They quickly overtook the party they were in chase of, and charged them, and would presently have made an end of them, even without the aid of the foot.

But Maumont their General perceived their danger, and came charging to their rescue, followed by a large party of the flower of his army. They fell upon Adam's reserve, who,

being utterly outmatched, retreated upon the town, the enemy following them up to the very gate.

Had their panic been a feint, as it was but too genuine, it could not have served them better. For there was no retreat for their pursuers, save between the river and those hedges that bristled with our men. Major Bull's party, reissuing from the gate, with Mr. Walker among them, drove them back by the way they had come; and the foot took them in hand as they fled in their turn; so that only a very few of them lived to rejoin their friends, who now came pouring across the bog to their aid, and that of the party Adam was engaged with.

By that time the demi-culverin that had been playing on us all the morning from Clooney Height was brought down to the edge of the river, exactly opposite the point of battle; their gunner fired a few shots across among our men, and would no doubt have continued his ball practice to our detriment. But our master-gunner, Mr. Watson, with a cannon of ours that was perched on the wall beside the Ship-quay Gate, took so good an aim at them that with a single shot he both disabled their gun and killed their gunner, and so put a happy end to that diversion.

Maumont, enraged no doubt that so many

of his soldiers could give no better account of our '*cowardly rabble*,' thought to break the back of this dispute with a single stroke; and so, singling out Adam, he rid for him. But, faith, he had tackled an adversary he could not settle. They lashed out great strokes at each other, their men standing round to watch them, as though 'twere an antique single combat of two knights; save that a man of the Irish took aim at Adam's noble black horse, and fired a shot that hit him in the shoulder—a dastardly deed, sure, under the circumstances, but one that brought about the undoing of his General. For the horse, rearing at the pain of the wound, gave such force to Adam's next stroke that Maumont was smitten clean through the neck and shoulder, and fell from his horse a dead man. His fall was the signal for a rout that none of the Irish officers could check, and our men returned to the city rejoicing and triumphing in a signal victory.

There the satisfaction was even passionate. For this was the first time our soldiers had been allowed their own way with the enemy, and instead of fleeing before them, 'twas the enemy that had been completely routed, with a loss of at least ten men to our one; not to mention one of their chief commanders, and several

other officers. A great deal of booty was also left on the field of battle, and fell to the share of the victors; one item thereof created a greater tumult of joy among the superstitious people of the baser sort than even the victory itself. This was a piebald horse that had belonged to one of their officers; it was brought unharmed into the town, and forthwith some man recollected an ancient prophecy that promised the eventual victory to the side that should capture such a horse as that. The silly saying was repeated from mouth to mouth with ever-growing delight, until it seemed that even among the better sort that far-off final triumph was held to be ours already. I think it was gazed at more, and more thankfully, as it was led through the streets, than its captors.

Every creature that was not walking in that triumphal procession was at the windows, a spectator of it. I, of course, was at mine, trying to feel like the rest, as I knew I ought. But the plaudits rang as flat upon mine ear as the words of Mr. Walker's sermon; I took shame to myself to know it, but never a bit the more did I care for them, for that. Two things, and only two, pierced through my veil of indifference; one was the drawn white face of pain of poor young Cornet MacLelland, as

he was carried past me wounded on a litter; the other was the face that Adam turned now and then from the shouts that greeted him upon his wounded horse, which he led by the bridle up the street. The poor creature leant his muzzle upon his master's shoulder, as though in that touch he found healing and forgetfulness for his pain.

CHAPTER XXXI.

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR.

Struggle as I might, I could not break through that barrier of cruel apathy that enclosed me. Sure, the chilly winter mists can hem one in as effectually as the walls of a prison, though they be nothing near so stout. Such a mist was I wrapped up in; and I wonder if the bareness of prison walls could weigh heavier on the spirits than its gray and narrowing blankness.

Nothing availed to pierce it. The funeral that was made for those that had fallen at Pennyburn Mill—I saw it, like all the rest of the town; and, sure, I thought they made a great and unnecessary to-do about a fate that was fair and happy; what was there to grieve for when a man died a man's death, and had his reward at the moment? When the second and still more encouraging engagement was fought at the same place, with a second French general

among the slain, what cared I? Not a single straw. The cannonade from Strong's Orchard, over against the Ship-quay Gate, was a terror to some of us; for my part, I minded it no more than thunder in summer; the shrieking of the bombs I heeded as little as the whistling of an autumn wind.

Some that had been forward to blame me for what they thought my over-keenness about the public affairs in the beginning of the siege would now go out of their way to fetch me news they thought should rouse me; I marked their efforts with a little faint gratitude, and perhaps a little faint amusement. But for being roused by any news they told me, good lack! one thing seemed as much a concern of mine as another, and that was not one whit.

When Mrs. Susan Holden, an ancient gentlewoman that was not of my acquaintance, was killed in her bed by a cannon-ball that broke through the window of her chamber, it became the topic of talk in the town; and all that spoke of it agreed in professing themselves mightily shocked at a death so awful. For my part, I wondered if any death could be less grief-worthy. She was eighty years of age; there could be little left in her cup of life but lees; she never knew what hurt her, but passed from quiet slumber into slumber yet quieter. But if

she had been but five-and-twenty, and the best of her life to come, how could such a death be compared to the death-in-life of imprisonment in the Bastille ?

And I had done him injustice in my thoughts, I told myself ; and presently fell to wondering if I had, for I could not forget that his cousin had brought me a different story from that in Lundy's letter. James would scarce have concealed his mission from him, I thought, if it were true that he had a mission. But then, on the other hand, it was possible that secrecy might have been enjoined upon him ; and either way, he was a miserable captive in the worst prison on earth.

Many a time, when I thought myself to be giving my mind wholly to some other thing, I found myself ringing the changes on these three notes. More and more they came between me and all my former interests, until I began to be half resigned to it, and ceased to try to regain my zest in life.

I tried to cover my stupor by an artful mask of mine old self ; but it deceived nobody. 'Could you weep, do you think,' said Rosa to me one day, 'suppose the house were laid in ruins, and we lay beneath it ?' 'Ay, truly !' said I, 'at any hour of the day or night.' But I think it was not true ; for during all that time

of numbness I never knew myself to shed a single tear.

Now one thing and now another would rouse me for the moment, to sink back into the same slough upon the next. Once it was the requisition that was sent to such as were thought to have victual to spare, to contribute towards the subsistence of the garrison. I was more than commonly well provided, and now that my household was so shrunken, could afford them so handsome a gift that it brought me the special thanks of the Governors and council. That pleased me, as making me feel myself of some small importance once more.

Another thing that happened shortly after Mrs. Holden's death restored me for a little while to my sense of life; this was the manner of it. Wamphray came in one day to desire my father's presence at the council, where it was being proposed that the magazine should be emptied (the enemy being thought to have information of its whereabouts), and the powder concealed in small quantities hither and thither through the town.

'The old dry well in your garden,' quoth he to my father, 'hath been thought a very fit place to bestow some of it; should you make any objection?'

'Why, as to that,' quoth my father, 'there's

no man in the world would like to have powder stored in any quantity so near his house at such a time.'

For all that, when he returned from the meeting of council he had given his consent to it, and accordingly twenty barrels were brought secretly to the house late that night, the family being all safe abed. 'Twas I that had been desired to open the door to them.

At the very moment it was brought to the door, the enemy, moved by I know not what malign insight, sent off a bomb, which passed humming and whistling over our heads. I promise you there was none of us but had a kindred whistling and humming in his ears, and felt a drumming in his breast, as though his heart had broken loose from its tether, and were galloping away out of danger.

'They're firing at random, of course,' said Wamphray. 'But, for God's sake, get the powder under cover as quick as we can!'

'Twas a stalwart soldier that stood torch-bearer to the party.

'Here!' says Wamphray. 'Take the torch, somebody, and let Simmons lend a hand with the powder.'

I stretched my hand for it without a word, and without a word he let me have it.

When it was all within the doors, we breathed

more freely; there was a silent pause of a few moments while we listened for the passage of another bomb. But none came.

Wamphray drew a heavy breath.

'Let us get it down to the well, and have done with it,' said he; 'and that at the best of our speed.'

At the word, the men began to carry it through the house, Wamphray himself, and my father, lending a hand.

It scarce seems credible to myself as I relate it, that chance should take so much the air of premeditation; but at that self-moment when the first of the men set foot in the garden, with the barrel of powder they carried, came the screech of the second bomb; it went wider of the house than the first, and passed harmlessly over the town. But for all that, the sound of it was to the men like spurs to a horse, and enhanced their speed to a point of very fury. Not a moment was lost; the powder was packed away in a marvellous short space of time, though no more bombs were fired while it was a-doing. My one care was to throw the light exactly where it was needed; and it was not till we were come within the house again that one of us so much as remembered that it was I who carried it. And for that night every feeling but exultation at the safe stowage

of the powder was driven clean out of my head. But in the morning the dull old megrim had come down upon me once more.

'Work is her medicine,' I overheard Wamphray say of me to Rosa.

So it was, and I knew it; but where and how was I to get it? Rosa was the mistress of the house, and even had she not been so, there was now scarce anything for a mistress to do in it. Margery was mistress in the nursery; and with Cicely, nurse to little James, to help her, certainly there was little to do there either. I might play with the children and welcome, if so it pleased me; but if I should venture so much as to tie a shoe-string for either of them, one or other of the nurses was to reckon with. I was become a kind of supernumerary, with neither place to fill nor duty to discharge; 'twas a vile, irksome feeling, and one that, even without other cause of grief, had soon withered up my energies as summer drought withers the grass.

Life was at its flattest, and the savour gone from it, as it seemed, for ever, when there came to our house a visitor from without the walls—my uncle namely, from Ling, to have speech of Adam his son. It was not of his own accord he came to us, as may well be imagined; the thing had been indeed impossible, so closely were we

now invested in this the third week of the siege. He came to us, part prisoner, part envoy, from Richard Hamilton, in the custody of two of the Irish troopers; it was a guardianship, to all seeming, effectual merely by reason of his own submission; for all his eighty years, he looked as if he might, with scarce an effort, have taken one of his guards in each hand and thrust them from him right and left. No eye, however jaundiced, could fail to look with pleasure on the splendid old man; even Adam is scarce equal to him (and there is no one else in all the province that approaches these two) in stature and bearing.

It needs no telling that we were glad to see him—indeed, it was mobbing he got, all of us crowding round him as though it were salvation merely to touch him. The guards were forced apart from him in an instant. Margery had the cleverness to invite them to the kitchen and set them down to a mug of ale apiece, and after that they were content to let their prisoner mind himself.

Prisoner he was indeed, as he lost no time in telling us, begging my father at the same time to send a message to Adam to come to him at our house.

'For,' said he, 'the less these fellows see of the town, the less they'll know. And, for mine

own part, the less I see of your defences, the less I shall be able to satisfy Hamilton, if so be he should take it into his head to question me.'

'Why, what right hath he,' said my father, 'to question one that is a non-combatant?'

'You may as well ask,' rejoined my uncle, laughing, 'what right he hath to send me into town upon his errands? That is a tyrannous action enough, considering that I'm living under protection, and have his own hand upon it. But they that be forced have no choice, and that's my case to-day. I am here upon an urgent inducement,' and at that word he laughed again, 'to advise my son Adam upon his conduct towards his Majesty King James and his commissioned officers.'

'I am sure you'll never do it,' said Rosa quickly, 'for anything they can offer you.'

'Will I not!' said my uncle, a little grimly. 'Wait till he comes, my dear, and you shall hear.'

'Why,' said my father, 'I doubt it will be but waste of breath, brother. Adam is a stiff man of his own mind, and, to be plain with you, I think he is old enough to know it.'

'No doubt,' said my uncle, with a curious twist of the mouth. 'I prepared the mind of the Lieutenant-General for some contumacy on his part. But,' said he, looking towards me,

'what keeps my pretty Mary there behind you all? Has she forgotten her old uncle? or does she think that Hamilton's bribes may have so corrupted him that he is no longer company for decent folks?'

'Neither, dearest uncle!' said I quickly, and found myself the next moment in mine old place, within the shelter of his arm.

Many and many a time I had nestled there in my childish days. Now it seemed to set me back in them once more.

Adam came presently to us, eager to welcome his father's visit, whatever cause had procured it. There is a great affection and confidence between these two, and we were about to withdraw ourselves and leave them together, that they might talk without restraint. But my uncle kept his arm close about me, and the others took it for leave to stay as well. Adam desired to know what it was that brought his father into town.

'Hamilton's orders,' said my uncle briefly, and fixing his eyes on Adam's face.

Adam looked perplexed.

'Make me understand, I pray you,' said he. 'How come you to be at Hamilton's orders? I thought you were living in safety in your own house, under his protection?'

'Why, so I was,' said his father, smiling.

'But the Lieutenant-General was so polite as to send a file of soldiers to fetch me this morning, being desirous to obtain my influence with you, to induce you to lay down your arms.'

'And that's a pretty request!' said Adam hotly. 'If this is how his protections are observed, what confidence could we put in them, supposing we had any inclination to submit?'

'That was what I told him,' said my uncle, with a curious intonation that went between indignation and chuckling. 'I told him, besides, what I have just been telling your uncle here—that you were a man hard to move, when your part was chosen. "If you should send an angel from heaven to him with such a proposal," said I, "he'd find himself denied, and so I tell you, my lord General." At that he was so obliging as to say that perhaps an angel from heaven might have less authority with you than your own father, and had the further generosity to promise me a hanging if I refused to exercise it.'

'Oh, but this is too much!' Adam broke out, and my father in the same breath. 'Does he take us for dolts, that we can't see what value he attaches to his promises? Why should he be more scrupulous in one case than in another?'

'Ah, I told him you'd ask that, too!' said my uncle, laughing again, as though General Hamilton's threat were the best of jests. 'But he desired me to assure you that 'twas in my case alone he would sanction the least infringement of them, and that only because of the extraordinary service I had it in my power to render to his Majesty's cause. "An extraordinary embassy to an extraordinary man," was the name he gave it. You, Adam, are the extraordinary man. What do you think of your dignity?'

'Why, the proposal is easy to answer,' said Adam, 'because there is but one answer fit to be given, and that's No, to it. No! and No! and No! again, whatever the bribe may be, or the threats. But as to sending you back into danger, it can't be thought of, either.'

'No,' broke in my father; 'we shall detain you here, brother, our prisoner instead of his. You won't be the first that hath been sent to us with a message and kept by force.'

'You are very kind!' said my uncle quietly. 'But I shall take leave to decline your friendly arrest. There's no one at home to take my place, if I stay with you. I shall even dare Hamilton's hanging—in faith, I'm sure there's little danger. Why, I told him plainly that I'd advise you to do the thing that I myself would

do in your place, and at your age. And he knew so well what that would be, that he never so much as asked me. 'Tis to satisfy someone else he hath treated me thus, take my word for it.'

'Well, now,' said Adam, 'I think they've tried every inducement on me that they can devise—rank, and gold, and flattery. I did not know I was half so fine a soldier, now, until my Lord Abercorn enlightened me. There was no post good enough for me under a colonel's in James's army; and gold—a thousand pounds to begin with—he showed me some of it. But,' said he seriously, 'if there's question of your life, father, why, there are fifty men better than I ready to take my place, if I lay down my sword.'

I felt my uncle's arm tighten around me at that word, and the throb that caused its tightening was repeated, to my own amazement, in mine own breast. It was ever Adam's way to undervalue himself. What danger might not that fault betray him into?—and us as well? For were he to lay down his sword, who could say how many might follow his example?

My uncle began to speak very deliberately, and in a most quiet voice, continuing the half-jesting tone he had used throughout the interview.

'Adam,' quoth he, 'I bethink me that I must call my promise to mind, and deliver my soul by advising you according to my conscience. You are my son, and I desire you will consider well what you are about. It's no light matter to rebel against your Sovereign, and they tell me you are the very backbone of this resistance. Consider the kind of king you would renounce—one that never knew what mercy was; never made a promise that he would not break, save to his priests; never thought for himself, and held it damnable sin in anyone else to do it. What his pledges of liberty of conscience and pardon are worth, you've just had some instance of, if it hath slipped from your mind how he hath kept the like in other cases. Think what kind of man it is that you would set up in his place—one that is the exact opposite of James in every respect; as faithful as he is merciful; tolerant, they say, to a very fault—ay, and a man that knows how to rule, into the bargain. Think what a change for this poor, distracted kingdom if such a man were set securely on the throne!'

His voice grew deeper and deeper as he spoke; now, when Adam would have answered him, he raised his hand to check him, and the last vestige of lightness disappeared both from his voice and face.

'My son,' said he, 'it would scarce become me to deny that you may be in a position far beyond your birth and your deserving. But there you are put; and 'twas the very finger of God that did point you out for it. Beware how you quit it, save upon as plain a leading, or else you may find yourself as base a deserter as Lundy. If it should come to a question of my life, as of course it may, remember this for your guidance, that never in my life did I grudge to set my life on a noble venture—'twould be hard to find a nobler than this!—and were you to purchase it by any cowardly compliance I would deny you for my son.'

None of us answered him by a single word; only Adam bent his head with a mixture of pain and pride that was beautiful to see. For me, my heart beat in my breast once more, though I knew it not till later.

My uncle's eyes followed me after that, as I moved about him, with a question in them that at last he put.

'What ails this child?' said he to my father; and at the same time he took my hand and drew me nearer him. 'Has she been sick?'

My father looked from him to me, as though it were my part to answer: I told him, no, I had not. He looked unsatisfied.

'There's something wrong, I can see,' said

he. 'I suspected it as soon as I saw her, and now I'm sure of it. What is it?'

Why no one would save me the pain of telling mine own grief, I have often wondered; but so it was. My uncle looked from one to another, but never a word could he bring from them, and so he was forced to turn again to me.

'What ails my pretty Mary?' said he again, and drew me to his side with the old manner of protection that I knew so well. It brought me in mind of the times when I used to confess my little childish faults to him, that he might intercede for me with my father; sure, I never knew him slow to do it. I dropped upon my knees at his side, as though I were in truth the guilty little maid of former years; but to answer his question was beyond my power: my throat seemed made of wood, and powerless to obey my will.

'Will no one tell me what she hath done?' said he angrily.

In truth, I believe he had forgotten I was woman-grown, and looked that they should tell him of some little careless fault that had been visited upon me over-sharply. At that, in some odd corner of my mind there shimmered a gleam of tender laughter; and at that again the frost that bound me was in some strange fashion broken up. All the pent-up pain of

weeks came pouring from my heart to mine eyes in a sudden flood. I found my voice again, though 'twas as sharp as the edge of a knife, and hurt me cruelly. What words I made use of I neither knew then nor know now; but in some frantic fashion I made a shift to tell him all my tale. All—I hid nothing, kept nothing back. I began at the thought of James's desertion, that up till now I had kept locked in mine own bosom, and went on to Lundy's letter and the news of his captivity. Whether the others were listening I neither knew nor cared, but when I was aware of myself again, there was no one in the room but my uncle and me.

He was stroking my hair—it was liker a return to my childhood than ever—I thought he had been stroking it so for hours.

'A soldier's wife must show herself brave, my child,' said he.

'I know it!' said I. 'And if it were any ordinary hardship—wounds, wherein I might tend him; death, even—a man's death on the field of battle—I could be as brave as my neighbours. But death in the Bastille—death from cold and hunger, very like, with never a soul to shut his eyes—that's hard to bear!'

There was another silence; then he said:

'It is; I should be hard of heart to deny it.

But even that pain hath been laid on other women——'

I cast aside his hand that caressed me.

'That's a speech worthy of Mr. Hewson,' said I bitterly. 'Sure, I bear no such ill-will to any woman in the world, as to take comfort from her distress.'

'Who have borne it bravely,' my uncle continued, taking no heed of my interruption.

He looked me in the eyes as he said it; there was both blame and balm in his. There was but one answer that could be made to them; to wit, that I would try to do the same.

'And take this for your comfort,' said he, 'that men in plenty have been released from prison, even from the Bastille. There's a war in progress; there will be prisoners to exchange; you may rest assured that James won't be forgotten. Were he dead and out of his misery, as you say, he were dead and gone for ever too; as it is, you have his return to hope for, and to look forward to. Yes, to look forward to; I am sure of it; you may be quite certain that he will not be forgotten.'

When he presently went away, he left that comfort behind him.

'She hasn't enough to do,' he said to my father as he was quitting the house in charge of his guards. And I knew that it was I he spoke of.

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE FIRST BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL HILL.

The very next day I began to go abroad again into the streets, for Mrs. Browning sent me a message, desiring I would go and see that child of Thomas Ash's that had been sick before, who now was ailing again. I saw little to disquiet her in the child's health ; but I did wonder how she could bear with the fretful timidity of Mrs. Gardner, who was still at the same point where I had left her on the day of Adam's entry into the town—namely, that we had never yet got the better of King James's forces *in the long-run*, and that *we should see what we should see*. 'Twas of no use, that falling in with her proverbial humour. I replied to her that *'tis a long lane that hath no turning*. Her rejoinder was instant and unanswerable, that *they laugh best who laugh last*. She seemed to relish her evil prognostications, and to derive much comfort from her murmurings.

Methought she might have reaped a better comfort from the altered aspect of the townsfolk which now was full of vigour and good cheer—those very men that Lundy had declared could not be brought to face the enemy running to take part in every sally and assault with the zest of school-boys bent upon a frolic. Far from needing to be urged forward, the task of their officers was to keep them in hand, and for every blow they had been baulked of formerly, they now rejoiced to strike ten.

They had a victory, a day or two after my uncle's visit, that must have rejoiced any heart, however timid and distraught. 'Twas on a Monday night, if my memory serves me rightly, in the beginning of May, that the soldiers of the watch at Bishop's Gate, and at the ravelin outside it, heard a noise of blows and a shot or two; and presently after the men that had been on outpost duty betwixt that and the Windmill came to the gate clamouring for entrance. They had been set upon in the darkness by a multitude of the enemy, they declared, and beaten out of their posts before they well knew what was happening.

Little could be done that night (for it was, as they say, as dark as a wolf's throat) save to inform the Governors and officers, and to keep the watch at every gate with redoubled vigilance

90

But at the first peep of the early dawn the wall was edged with eager faces, peering out towards the Windmill; and there they saw a sight they were nowise prepared for.

Making the most of the short summer night, the enemy was entrenched across the whole breadth of the hill, their lines extending from the bog to the very Strand. They must have wrought like heroes to have done it in the time, though greatly helped by the fences and ditches that were in the line of their works. Some of their cannon were already in position, and they were in the act of mounting more. Plainly, their design was to establish a battery in front of Bishop's Gate, that, playing in concert with the one in Strong's orchard, should rake the city from end to end.

'Twas a project that must be hindered at any cost, and every moment made that a harder task. For, swarming like bees a-hiving, toiling like ants a-building, the enemy were broadening and strengthening and finishing their breast-works before the very eyes of our men.

'Twas a mercy of the greatest, at that moment, that our leaders were at once soldiers who knew their business, and strong men who could make themselves obeyed. Had they been otherwise, assuredly the very fire of wrathful daring that was the strength of our men must

have proved their undoing and the ruin of the town. For it was scarce possible to restrain them from rushing out all together pell-mell to make an end of the enemy in front of them (which was but a detachment, when all was said) and so leaving the other gates unguarded ; an easy prey to the rest, who might have entered thereby without the least opposition.

By special grace of Heaven, our Governors and officers had their eyes wide open to that danger, and, since to ask for volunteers had been but to add fuel to their impatience, Colonel Baker began to choose those that should go out, taking ten from each company. Mr. Walker stood the while trying, with a pedantry of soldiership, to form them into proper military order ; but not many would endure to be so curbed. Most of them ran straight out upon the enemy as soon as they heard their names called ; and, of the rest, many got upon the walls again, and began to shout to the Irish gunners, who now began to fire a shot or two, to spare their pains and their powder.

'Look at the gate!' they cried. ''Tis open enough ; and why shouldn't it be, when we're ready to receive you at any hour of the day or night? You'll batter the wall a long time before you'll make as wide a breach.'

But, sure, it was not many shots they fired

from that battery, the gunners presently finding work enough to do to hold their own with men that were come too close to be shot at.

Mr. Walker and his veterans were fain to follow the rest as quick as they could from the Ferry-quay Gate, for fear of being left out of the fray altogether, which certainly had gone near to break their leader's heart; for if the man be a bred clerk, he is none the less a born soldier. The proof of it is in the quality of the men that attached themselves to him, who were mostly those that had seen most service, and who knew the peril of over-haste, and how often it comes poor speed in the end. In this engagement, however, the rash ones did most of the work, and reaped most of the credit.

'Twas little short of marvellous how their fury, instead of blinding them to everything but itself, gave them eyes for all that was necessary to be done. Not a ditch nor a hedge did they pass, but they beat out of it, and drove before them to the trenches, some of the enemy's men. Nor did they waste themselves by rushing in one behind another at the point of the battery; but deployed to right and left along the whole length of the Irish line, in a manner to rejoice the heart of Mr. Walker, had he been among the spectators instead of among the actors.

The point of greatest danger to our soldiers

was at the Strand, where the cannonade from the other side of the water had them in the flank. Captain Gunter and his party, affronting this danger with all the gallantry imaginable, rid clean round that end of their line that abutted on the river, and began to roll them up upon their friends. At that, their Brigadier-General Ramsay, seeing their critical condition, brought up his reserve of dragoons to support them. But though these had the advantage of the ground, they were no more fit to withstand the fury of our onslaught than the foot. After a short encounter, they broke, and began to fly up the hill. General Ramsay, trying to rally them, was slain. At his fall a panic seized the Irish, spreading from one company to another like wildfire. The panic became presently a flight, and the flight a slaughter; nor could all the efforts of their officers either rally them or so much as bring them off in good order.

This was by far the most important battle we had yet fought, and our men came dropping in by little parties at a time near all the afternoon. Every company brought in its spoil of colours (five pair were taken in this engagement), or booty, or prisoners of note. But the chief damage to the enemy was the loss of General Ramsay, which by itself had been enough to balance accounts, had they been the victors and

not we. He was buried the next day at the Long Tower, with all the honours of a soldier, our Governors according them a truce for that very purpose.

Cracked crowns were not lacking on our side neither, and one of those that came by such an ornament was my brother Wamphray. A mighty bad patient he made. Faith, only a little more strength in the arm that smote had made him lie quiet enough, and long enough; and so Dr. Aicken told him one day in my hearing, when I was playing nurse to him instead of Rosa, who was quite tired out. The doctor stole a glance at me from time to time, as though he longed to physic me as well as Wamphray. I marked him, in spite of his carefulness.

'These physicians,' I thought to myself, with perhaps a little mild contempt, 'how thoroughly their own skill blinds them! They think there is no sickness but of the body.'

Faith, the good man's insight was better than mine that contemned it, and so I was quickly to find.

'What's the matter with you?' he asked of me a little bluntly, when he had done with Wamphray. 'But I dare say,' quoth he the next moment, 'it's more in the province of Mr. Hewson there below than in mine.'

At Mr. Hewson's name I could not forbear a little grimace.

'Since you ask me, Dr. Aicken,' said I, 'it's neither more nor less than idleness.'

The doctor pursed his mouth up into a 'whew,' and the next moment emitted it; sticking his hands under his coat-tails at the same time, in the manner of one taking a resolution.

'And that's a queer thing, now,' said he, 'considering that there's work in plenty, wanting nothing but hands to do it. Ay,' said he, catching himself up, 'I said wrongly there; it wants heart as well as hands.'

Wamphray turned his head as he lay; he said nothing, but evidently he was pricking up his ears. I said I should be glad to learn what that work was whereof the doctor spoke.

'Oh, you'll think me a pagan, I make little doubt,' quoth he, 'when I mention it. But I'll think you another if you do, and so there will be no waste of compliments. Here's this man, now, hath yourself and his wife, not to mention half a dozen other people, ready to fly at his least groan, giving their whole time to him without a murmur. You should see some patients of mine in the town,' he finished, with a gesture of anger.

'I would willingly tend them,' said I, 'if that's the work you mean.'

'Well said,' quoth he. 'But wait a moment. It's not for our own wounded I'm asking your help—not a blackguard of the lowest of them but has as many nurses as he needs—but the wounded prisoners that have been brought in. Sure, any man might think they were some kind of outcast heathen, with neither body to suffer nor soul to save, to see the way they're shunned. I can't get a proper nurse to them either for pity or reward.'

'Am I to understand,' says Wamphray, sitting up in his bed, 'that you're asking my sister to become nurse-tender to some of those *Irish* blackguards that were brought in the other day?'

'Will you please to keep your head down, Captain Murray,' says the doctor very quietly, 'else I won't be answerable for the consequences. This business lies between your sister and myself, give me leave to tell you, and you have no concern with it.'

'She shall not give you yes for an answer, for all that,' says Wamphray, lying down again with a groan, 'until she hath taken time to think it over considerately.'

'I don't ask it,' said the doctor. 'But perhaps she will have one ready for me when I

come to see you to-morrow.' And so he took his leave, but a minute later thrust his head in at the door again. 'My way of thinking of them,' said he, 'is as natural to my profession as your way to yours. Your duty is to get the better of them by hook or by crook; by wounding, or slaying, or anything else. My duty is to patch them up again; and I tell you it makes me regard them as fellow-creatures and fellow-countrymen.'

And so was gone in earnest, or ever he heard Wamphray's rejoinder, 'Sentimental stuff fit for a woman;' for which, perhaps, he had some justification in the perfidious behaviour of the Irishmen, whereof we had fresh instances near every day. I, having seen less of that than he, was fain to take Dr. Aicken's words to heart and ponder them, and the more I did so the more reason I found to think them true, or, at the least, the fitter model for a woman's following. Like doth draw to like, as the proverb hath it, and pain doth open the door to pity, which is its next-door neighbour. The pain of mind that I had suffered, and was suffering, did open my mind to feel for their pain of body; perhaps that is the best office of adversity, and the rainbow of its gloom. And though that, like the other rainbow, be but sunshine passed through tears, and caught on cloud, doubtless

'tis the bow of a promise as much greater and more glorious than the first as the soul of man is than the senseless vapour.

I thought these things vaguely enough at that time, if I thought them at all; whether or no, they wrought in me so that I was ready to go with Dr. Aicken the next morning. 'Twere easier to fancy than to paint my surprise when he took me—the very first place we went to—to the prison of my Lord Netterville, a gentleman with whom I had already some slight acquaintance. His wound, though painful in the extreme, was nothing dangerous, being the loss of the fingers of his right hand, which had been shot away. I quickly learnt to dress it to the doctor's perfect satisfaction, as well as to that of Margery, my maid and Mentor, who would not permit me to stir abroad upon my new errands without her. I think she will bear me witness that I submitted with a very good grace, and she rewarded me for my obedience by doing all the hardest of the work and giving me all the thanks.

My Lord Netterville, though greatly to be pitied for the loss of his fingers and the consequent helplessness (which irked him, I believe, more than the pain he suffered), was to be envied in one thing—the brotherly kindness of his room-fellow, Colonel Talbot. 'Twas a

lesson to the gentlest of us to see how this stern soldier would perform the most trifling services for his comrade, thinking nothing beneath him that could give the poor man ease ; bearing, too, like any nurse with her child, with my lord's fretfulness, which sometimes he could not altogether repress. Perhaps here, also, it was pain that was the teacher ; for Colonel Talbot, like so many of our own friends, had suffered much from the hardships of the winter campaign, and often seemed as much in need of tending as his companion.

It may well be supposed that my nursing took me often into the poorest parts of the town, and there already the distress that had been foreseen began to be felt. 'Twas borne with the most unflagging courage and cheerfulness, and the expectation of the relief that might even now be on its way from England made every day a greater figure in the poor folk's thoughts. It had been a cruel thing, as well as thankless, to remind them how much time must pass before these reinforcements and supplies could possibly reach us. Six weeks was the shortest, eight was likelier ; and we were now only in the fourth. But those of us that had enough and to spare might surely have a care of such as were poorly off, and keep the delay from bearing too sorely upon them.

My being so much out of doors brought me often into scenes that other women for the most part missed. Many a horrid thing I witnessed that coloured my dreams for weeks; but many a thing also so splendid and heart-stirring that death itself, I hope, will not be able to blot them out of my memory. Once, when Margery and I were making our way home through Bishop's Gate Street, Adam Murray galloped past us on his black horse, now whole of its wound. He passed us with a wave of the hand, and a scattering of sand and gravel from the dispavemented street, and was gone through the gate, which stood open ready for his passage. The spirit of curiosity got the upper hand of both of us; we ran as fast as we could to the Royal Bastion; and being mounted upon it, held our breath to see Adam making his headlong way through a perfect lane of gunshot-flashes and smoke. Poor marksmen truly were these Irish, or else he had never passed that ambuscade alive, far less unwounded. Looking further afield, we saw in a moment the object of his haste; 'twas Colonel Blair and his regiment that were scattered hither and thither upon the hill, chasing the Irish sharp-shooters—save the mark!—out of the ditches, and from the shelter of the hedges. The ambush whereof Adam had run the gauntlet must, I suppose,

have outflanked them and so escaped their notice. Just over the brow of the hill, and thus out of their view, though visible to anyone looking from the vantage of the city wall, was an overpowering force of the enemy; our men were outflanked on both sides, and in a few minutes more they had been completely surrounded. Had the assailants succeeded in falling upon them unwarned, scattered as they were and unsupported, never a man of Blair's had survived to come within Derry gates again. 'Twas a thing to make one hold one's breath to see them in such jeopardy, and he that rid to take them warning in jeopardy yet greater. Had his horse made a false step, had he been touched by but one of those shots that sparkled round him, then had the most precious life in Derry been fruitlessly cast away—then had his effort failed. He did not fail. We scarce had time to realize the peril ere he was at Colonel Blair's side; and thereafter riding to recall the scattered parties of the men, leaping his horse over hedges and ditches, shouting the word of command in a voice that we on Derry wall could catch some sound of.

After that I had the opportunity to behold Adam as Wamphray had wished I could—to wit, in his capacity as a leader, and in the moment of emergency; indeed, it was a sight

to make me proud of my kinsman. Flashing to and fro like wildfire, and with no more thought of his own safety; marshalling the men, so that though in retreat they should present a front, and a warlike front, to their pursuers—it was nothing less than glorious. The blood came tingling into my face after a fashion I had never felt before.

'Twas an anxious moment when they approached the ambuscade that Adam had ridden through on his way to them, for the enemy pursued them hotly, and was at their very heels. Yet not too anxious, neither; for they were disposed in a kind of triangle, facing every way, and they kept the order perfectly. When the Irishmen saw their manner of coming on, they judged discretion to be the better part of valour, and were fain to take to their heels right and left in a very pitiful fashion.

Our men entered the gates in perfect order, and without the least appearance of haste; nor did we suffer the loss of a single man in an adventure that might have proved so disastrous.

Adam overtook us, as luck ordained it, while we were going home. 'Tis sure a very womanish weakness, and I blush to set it down, but when I tried to speak to him of his exploit as it deserved, scarce one word

could I pronounce, because of that stricture of the throat that torments me whenever I am strongly moved.

'You are disappointed, Mary,' said he, 'and I can't wonder; for it was very near being a proper engagement; I doubt we had had the worst of it, though, had it come to that. I judged it wiser to bring them off as I did than to encounter such odds; though, if I had known you were among the watchers, I'd scarce have had the heart to disappoint you.'

I contrived to tell him that it was not disappointment kept me silent, but admiration that was like to choke me.

'They did behave wonderfully well,' said he, as though it were a new light to him, 'for such raw men. They formed up as though they had been drilled to it for years. When we shall have taught them a little caution and a little scouting, they will make as good soldiers as any man need desire to have under him.'

I could not forbear to laugh, after what I had just seen, at the thought of the caution they were like to learn from Adam Murray. I could not tell, when I came to think it over, whether I admired or envied him most heartily. To have the right gifts of a soldier, and to be set in the place that calls them forth, is sure great happiness. What joy can there be in a

woman's life to compare with that burning one of casting one's life into the scales and plucking forth victory as the counterpoise of its risk?

Set in the midst of such scenes as these, so painful on the one hand, and on the other so heroical, 'tis little marvel if I presently forgot to think of mine own spirits, whether they were dull or hearty. Sick or well, sad or merry, what did it matter? How could I spare time to think of myself when there were so many other and more engrossing things to think of? Once again I felt myself in the centre of the web of events, and was glad and happy to mark the thrilling of its cords.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL HILL—THE ENGLISH SHIPS.

FROM the first of my going to see the wounded prisoners, both they and their comrades that were whole appeared to depend greatly upon me for intelligence of what was being done. And little marvel, since from their guards they had one kind of story; and from the chirurgeon that had leave to visit my Lord Netterville, and the messenger that came to them with their food, they got quite another. They had sure been utterly at a loss what to believe, except for me; for, indeed, I was as far from desiring to give too much credit to our own side as from keeping back any that was due to them, and that they were candid enough to believe.

Owing to this my new business of intelligencer I took some pains to learn all that was going on, and I think I may say without vanity that

they might easily have had a worse news-carrier. Of much that I described I had been an actual eye-witness, and of the rest had the best of accounts from some of the chief of the actors. Many a time I was half ashamed to have no better a story to tell these poor gentlemen of their comrades; not, certainly, that I would have wished the tables turned for their benefit, but when I saw my Lord Netterville how he chafed, Colonel Talbot how he reddened, and Sir Gerard Aylmer how he hung his head, at my tales, I would fain have been able to tell them that their friends had quitted them like soldiers that knew their business. This was but rarely the case, for now their best men were either slain or taken. The soldiership was all on our side at this time, as they were apt to confess—indeed, I might say to complain.

There was Colonel Nugent, to be sure; he was a fine soldier; but then his command was not of sufficient importance to allow play to his talents. Had he been in Hamilton's place, I have heard them say, there had been another tale to tell. Perhaps; and then again, perhaps not. For on the single occasion when he fairly measured himself against Adam (lying in wait at the Danish fort to intercept him on his return from a picqueering expedition)

Adam it was who, by his dash and readiness, came off the victor, and scathless.

So curious a freak of chance occurred in that combat that I am minded to set it down. Another officer that was of Nugent's party, charging at Adam, came to close quarters with him, and was killed. In his fall his cloak came unfastened, and the wind, spreading it out, caught it from the dead man's shoulder, and cast it upon Adam's instead. 'Twas a strange thing to see him riding into Derry arrayed in a scarlet cloak laced with gold and silver—King James's livery!

Never a day passed at this time without something attempted either on the one side or the other. A waiting time, they say, is a weary time; but sure it was not so with us. There never lacked subject of talk among us; nor subject of rejoicing, neither, for the matter of that. In most of our encounters we were victorious; I recall but two occasions at this time when the fortune of the day went the other way. One of them was that attempt upon the fort above Creggan, wherein Captain Noble and Captain John Cunningham, pushed on by their own hardihood, went too far within the enemy's lines, and were surrounded and put to flight. It cost the life of poor Captain Cunningham, who was killed by them after

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

quarter promised. The other occasion was more to their credit, though the tardiness of one of our own officers in bringing up the reserve was a good ally to them. It was when, in spite of the utmost our men could do, they established their trenches just on the other side of the bog, quite close to us. After that, they began to hem us in so closely that we could no longer permit our cattle to graze over the bog as hitherto, and had it not been for the wisdom of our Governors in taking in the ground on the Windmill Hill as far as to the mill itself, we should now have been in a very evil case; for it would have been out of our power to come at Columbkille's Well for water to drink; and the wells within the walls were so muddied and fouled by the continual firing that the supply from them was scarce fit to be used even for washing.

This the enemy had perhaps got wind of, or perhaps it was but in the ordinary course of a siege that they determined to deprive us of this ground that we had taken in. 'Twas well fortified; they had themselves done much of the work for us on the night before the famous first battle of Windmill Hill. But we, profiting by the hours of darkness, when their cannon from Strong's Orchard could not annoy us, had greatly strengthened their works, deepening

the trenches, raising the bank to over seven feet high, and adding redoubts for the proper securing of the whole.

This ground they now resolved to take from us, if might or men could do it. My prisoner-patients gave me unwittingly some inkling of a great design afoot, expressing themselves in the handsomest manner desirous that a composition should be come to between the city and General Hamilton while, as they said, *we were yet in the case to exact conditions and terms.* I told them very plainly that were the Governors to attempt any such treaty, and 'the rabble' (I protest I began by this time to glory in the word) to get wind of it, their authority would slip from them like snow from the roof in the sunshine, and they themselves would stand in peril of their lives.

'Why so?' said they. 'But 'tis a great pity, for Richard Hamilton is a merciful man, and an easy man to deal with, and the Irishry, when they have the upper hand, *are not.* And,' they went on to explain, 'there are some in the place that have shown us such friendship, and deserved so well of us, that we should be happy to think them out of the reach of danger.'

'Perhaps, then,' said I demurely, 'if the worst should come to the worst, you won't

refuse to stand the friend of such with the Irish at a pinch ?'

'It might not then be so easy,' they declared.

I left them with a curtsey that had a little mockery in it, could they have known it. An unconquerable trick have these Irishmen of being still victors before the battle. Experience, one might have thought, had gone about to teach them better judgment by that time.

One thing they had learnt, and that was that one man of our rank and file had an easy bargain of ten of their scullogues, but they conceited themselves that among the gentry it was just the contrary. Accordingly, Captain Butler, second son to my Lord Mountgarret, had been at some pains to form a band of gentlemen-volunteers that were to follow him as their captain ; and they had all bound themselves together by an oath to top our rampart on the Windmill Hill, or perish in the attempt. They were now to learn that, man for man, the generality of our officers were equal to theirs in every respect ; and that, matched against the best of ours, they had no more chance than their men.

'Twas on the 4th of June, at low-water in the morning, that they delivered their attack ; and very furiously and gallantly they did it. They rid clean round the end of our rampart that

abutted on the Strand, so getting within our lines and coming to thrust of sword with us. At the first, it did verily seem as though they had some magic to their ally, coming unwounded out of the hot fire which our men received them with. Thomas Ash, I heard, had some of the chief credit at this critical moment; 'twas he that did perceive that they wore armour under their clothes, and shouted it aloud; whereupon Captain Crooke gave the word to aim at the horses; when that was done, that combat was to all intents over. Doubtless they came within our line, and doubtless there they stayed; for between the prisoners and the slain our men accounted for them all but three.

The rest of the horse, seeing how the gentlemen-volunteers were received, had no great stomach to come on; nor could all the shouting wherewith it was sought to encourage them from their own lines hearten them to do it. Perhaps, however, it was as much policy as fear that checked them; for now the battery on the other side of the river began to play, flanking our men; and at the same time their foot delivered a most determined attack upon our centre, and their grenadiers upon our right. Every man of the front rank carried a faggot, which they cast into the trench to fill it up. The foot were quickly disposed of, they

having miscalculated the soldiership of ours in a surprising manner, considering what they had seen of it. They imagined, it should seem, that our men would fire a single volley all together; and meant to rush in while they were reloading, mount our breastwork, and overcome its defenders by sheer force of numbers. Instead of this, our men divided themselves into three, or four, or even five parties, according to the number and fury of their assailants, and delivered their fire by turns, picking off their men with the utmost coolness. Their fire, thus continuously maintained, disconcerted their opponents so completely that they were fain to take to their heels; each man going off under the protection of a comrade's body, which they hoisted on their backs by way of shelter from our fire. Some, that came on with more determination, and succeeded in mounting our bank, found themselves hauled over it by the hair of their heads, and so made prisoners. On the right of our line, it appeared at first as though the grenadiers were about to count a victory as an off-set to the defeat of their comrades. They also were provided with a front-rank of faggot-bearers, to make passages for them across our trench, and so hotly did they come on that our men were put to flight; the redoubt at that point was left empty for some

minutes, save for one little boy, that stood upon the bank and threw stones at the enemy as they were laying their faggots. But the men that had fled, being reinforced from the city, returned very valorously upon their assailants before they had time to make good their footing, threw them quickly into confusion, and pursued them over the bog with great slaughter.

In this action Colonel Baker showed himself to deserve the name of General rather than of Governor; he displayed the qualities that go furthest in the winning not of battles merely, but of campaigns. Standing upon the Double Bastion, he kept a watchful eye upon every part of the field; wherever reinforcements were needed, thither he immediately despatched them; where the ammunition ran low, he sent it as promptly. And they that offered themselves to be his messengers were none other than the women and children, venturing themselves with all the coolness of veterans to take food and drink, match, and even powder, to the men, and that through the hottest of the fire.

Very disconsolate were my friends among the prisoners when next I saw them; humbled, and ready to confess the prowess both of our leaders and of our men. My Lord Netterville endeavoured to make light of his chagrin; Colonel Talbot, whose discomfiture went too

deep for such pretences, took him to task for it.

'Don't I know you, Netterville,' said he, 'and that your feeling about it is the same as my own?'

'What's that, I pray you?' quoth Lord Netterville.

'Why, merely that you'd pawn one half of your life with joy, for leave to spend the rest in fair fight against these rebels, like Butler and Macdonnel on Tuesday,' quoth he, with bitterness; and then went pacing to and fro through the room, chafing in his vexation like a caged lion.

'And that's a mighty unfriendly name you give us,' said I, partly to divert his thoughts from what he could nowise alter. But he took no notice of my challenge.

'That Colonel Murray, now!' said he. 'I understand, madam, that he is a kinsman of yours. It's not to be pleasant to you, I assure you, that I say I know not the thing I would not pay for leave to measure myself with that man!'

'To be pleasant to me!' I said, unable to forbear a smile. 'I should think not, indeed, when you express such rancour against my kinsman.'

'Ah, madam,' said he, 'you don't understand. That's as far from rancour as east from west.

It's not hatred, but a kind of love, that prompts that wish ; and I assure you if any man said the like of me, I'd think he was paying me the highest compliment in his power.'

'For all your successes,' said my Lord Netterville to me presently—'and, credit me, I'd be the last to belittle them—this struggle can have but one end. Your valour, your devotion—which, sure, are worthy of the heroes of antiquity—what can they do in the long-run, save to add to the bitterness of your doom? Do you think we are ignorant—or that our friends in the camp can be ignorant—how scarce and dear your provisions are growing, even now? What can one town do, however resolute?—or how long can it hold out against the united resources of two kingdoms?'

I led him towards the window, which commanded a view of the cathedral tower—and that was crowded with men, looking in the direction of Culmore.

'You see, my lord,' said I, 'how 'tis populated, as one might say. What do you think they're looking at?'

Assuredly, I had no desire to exult over a fallen enemy. But I fear there was some tone in my voice—or else perhaps I stole a furtive glance of triumph towards Margery—that betrayed my feeling ; for he reddened.

'How should I know?' said he. 'May I pray you of your courtesy to inform me?'

'They are looking at ships that are lying in the Lough, my lord,' said I. 'And we have good reason to think that these are English ships, laden with troops to reinforce us, and victual to relieve us withal.'

'That,' says my lord, 'of course alters the complexion of affairs entirely.'

I left them quite cast down, to think that we were out of the reach of being reduced; that their friends should now have little chance to retrieve their failures. I went forth into the streets to find our sober townsfolk gone wild with joy — men that had no acquaintance shaking each other by the hand for the sympathy of a common deliverance. There was nothing in men's mouths, there was nothing in men's thoughts, but rejoicing and thankfulness, that now our troubles were past; our difficulties surmounted; our relief at hand.

That they came not into the river next day took little from our confidence; for were they not *there*—in our sight, within reach, if not of our messengers (since the river-banks were lined with the enemy) yet of our signals, which came to the same thing? If anything were needed to assure us how near victory was come to our doors, 'twas the tidings that one Doolan

brought that night to the walls, that my Lord Galmoy was in the article of striking his camp, as knowing that now persistence in the siege was no better than waste of time and pains.

But day after day passed without the least attempt on the part of the fleet to reach us—day after day, while we signalled our necessity to them without response. What to think we knew not. My Lord Galmoy's camp sat down again, and so continued. The bombardment went on more vigorously than ever. And then rumours began to reach us that were very discomfortable. One of the enemy's officers, it was said, had been entertained at dinner by the Admiral himself. What good to us could that portend? or, taken in connection with the delay, did it not justify the feeling of doubt and suspense that now began to grow into a kind of agony?

It was fated to be an agony that certainty should add to rather than diminish. Nothing, they say, is so hard to bear as the heart-sickness of hope deferred. Credit me, they that say so have never known the heart-sickness of hope withdrawn.

That frequent attempts were made to send a messenger to them needs scarce be stated; would we see our hope fade to despair without an effort to realize it? Many a man left th

city determined that if Kirke loitered in sight of us without making one attempt to reach us, it should not be, at least, without knowledge of our straits. Alas! it was but the loss of one precious life after another, and all equally in vain. All was fruitless. The enemy, that now had no longer the confidence to meet us in the field, had yet the guile to frustrate all our attempts to communicate with the fleet. There was nothing for it but to wait the progress of events with all the fortitude we could muster up.

At last, one morning, there was observed a movement among the ships in the Lough; and forthwith the walls, the church-roof, the tower—every point of vantage, in short—was packed with the densest crowd that ever had filled it yet. They that could do no better stood in the streets, awaiting the words of tidings from them that could see what the ships were doing. The enemy perceived their opportunity, and began to fire upon the masses of people. What cared they? Not a straw. The cannon-balls might have been snowflakes for all the effect they produced on the men of Derry, assembled (as they tremulously hoped) to witness the approach of their deliverance. Think what was their agony to see the ships, freighted with salvation, drop slowly down the Lough, and so into the open and out of sight. It was a kind

of death. Strong men fell a-sobbing, and thought no shame of it; women cast themselves on the ground in the open streets, crying in the bitterness of sheer despair. No riot, nor shrieking, nor sound of cursing was heard; the people were not enraged, but stunned. One question was asked by many and many a voice, 'Is Lundy with them?' If he was not, sure the spirit of his treason was.

After a blind, purposeless, hopeless fashion, the folk began to turn their faces homeward. Homeward! What homes had the half of them, now that so much of the city lay in ruins? Dens among the rubbish; lairs under shelter of the walls, where they thought themselves safest from the cannon-balls and bombs that harassed them night and day.

A voice rose shrill and clear above the sound of the grieving—some say it was the voice of a traitor; for my own part, I think it was the voice of some man maddened by despair.

'Let us go and make terms with General Hamilton, since better may not be!' it cried.

No one could have foreseen the effect of it upon the crowd; it was as though he had shouted a thrilling battle-cry. The bowed heads were tossed erect; the sound of weeping ceased. Men and women together took up the watchword Adam Murray had taught

them; it rose from streets and walls in a solid shout that drowned the roaring of the cannon: 'No surrender!'

Again and again they rang it out, so that the enemy in his trenches must have heard the very words. 'No surrender! no surrender! no surrender!'

And now it was no passing enthusiasm, for they had counted the cost of endurance to the end.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

TROUBLES THICKEN.

Richard Hamilton had now two great powers to his allies—hunger and heart-sickness; and they speedily brought about a change in the temper of our men that it was out of the power of his arms to effect. This was the change from the happy gallantry that looks upon danger as a frolic and on hardship as a jest, to the sad fortitude that must spend itself in the patient endurance of necessary evils. The one temper is as heroical as the other, no doubt; but, alas! the second hath little life in it compared to the first. And this we quickly discovered from the way the people began to drop around us, victims at this time less to privation than to disappointment and despair.

One of the first to fall was Colonel Baker, the loss of whose life—most precious to us—lies at nobody's door but Kirke's. 'Tis true, the man had come into the town from

Coleraine with health much shattered by that spring campaign upon the Bann which had destroyed so many. Ghastly ill he looked often enough, when going about in the town in pursuance of his duty. But the successes of our troops had done wonders for him. He began to have more colour in his face and more vigour in his goings with every engagement we came well out of. When the rest of us went out of our wits with joy at the sight of the English ships, Colonel Baker looked near as well and strong as ever he did in his life.

But as soon as the hope of a speedy end to our conflict was taken from him, 'twas the beginning of his death. A day or two after Kirke turned his back on us, 'twas known that Governor Baker kept his room ; next it was his chamber he was forced to keep ; and then his bed, from which he never rose.

Then was the time for Mr. Walker to show what manner of man he was. So he did, and it was a man of an excellent spirit he shone out. To speak the truth, many of us had thought this gentleman too much of a soldier for his cloth. We excused it by supposing that his natural bent was to the military life, and not the clerical. Now we had reason to think ourselves dull and mistaken, and to see that it was not soldier and no parson he was, but soldier

and parson both. He acquitted himself nobly, to my thinking. Many thought him meddlesome, declaring that he went far beyond what he had warrant for, both in his governorship and in his ministrations; trenching upon what was the business of other people, and none of his. 'Twould have been more becoming in these cavillers to give thanks, that, where so many were dejected and cast down, one man, at least, felt our reverses as a spur and call to action.

Wherever despondency was to be combated, that was the place to look for Mr. Walker, ready both with encouragement and reproof; showing how, since battles were not to be won without wounds, so neither was a siege to be sustained without privation and distress; reminding them how worthy of such pains was the cause; how faithful and able their Defender; how precious the trying of their faith, whereby they should shine out hereafter brighter than gold. And never, I think, did the noble hearts he spoke to fail to respond to his words. The sparkle might be gone from the fire, but not its heat; the brightness from the blade, but neither its edge nor its strength.

What need we began to have of all the steel our temper owned, let the prisoner tell that hath seen his fetters a-making, and felt them

being riveted on his limbs. For Kirke had been simple enough (or astute enough) to let slip among these enemies of his that were his friends some hint of the fear that withheld him from attempting the river, which was, that he had heard that a heavy boom had been laid across it, to bar the passage to ships. The enemy was not so dull but that they could take a lesson, and they began immediately to put his bugbear into shape.

Full in our view, too. Many an evening, returning, very like, from some of my nursing, I found the wall lined with citizens, looking on at the making of that great prison-bolt. And strange it was, under that perfect summer sky, from which peace breathed down visibly over the earth, to see men so bent upon compassing each other's destruction. Stranger still, when one came to think of it, that it was the religion of peace that set them so by the ears.

The first boom they made came to nothing, spoilt chiefly by its own strength. It was made of strong great beams of oak, clamped and bound with iron, and wrapped about with a cable of twelve inches thick ; and by reason of its weight it would not float on the surface of the river, but hung suspended in the water. And as if the river, that had been given us for our protection, would not lend itself to our un-

doing, no sooner was it finished than there came a great tide, that broke it all to pieces; upon which the enemy went to work incontinent, and built another of fir, strengthened and secured in the same manner. That floated. After that the river was barred to purpose, and he that would come to us by way of the sea had an obstacle indeed in his path.

And now, as if to complete our discouragement, came the news that Marshal von Rosen was expected day by day at the enemy's camp. The accounts we had heard of this officer's ferocity and ability were enough to terrify any courage; and the prisoners gave us to understand that the worst that was said of him was rather behind the truth than beyond it.

Not one of those I knew failed to inform me how deeply he desired we would make our composition with General Hamilton, so as to be out of the reach of the cruelties that might be practised on us if we were forced to capitulate to Von Rosen. I would represent to them that the city must first be taken before these atrocities could be applied to us; at which they would shake their heads, as men that understood that the battle was to the strong, and deplored our blindness to our own interest.

We were not long in doubt about the arrival of this redoubtable commander after he was on

the spot. There was an immediate increase of energy that told its own tale. The enemy's lines, which had once already been moved nearer to us, were brought nearer still. The bombardment grew much brisker, as many as forty bombs being fired into the city in one day. Sixteen new forts were erected round about us, and mounted with cannon; they battered us day and night with cannon-ball, many of them red-hot, which did a deal of damage. The city appeared to rock to its foundations to the noise of their artillery, and it was no uncommon thing for a house to tumble down about the ears of its owners. As to the Diamond House, that was gone; battered into such utter ruin that the inhabitants carried away for firewood the fragments it was beaten into. Many people would no longer trust themselves within house-walls, but lay at night under the shelter of the wall of the city or of the rampart on the Windmill Hill; and to this practice my good friend the doctor said he traced much of the illness that now began to vex the town.

What rendered this attack peculiarly hard to bear was the want of bullets to return it, for now our supply began to run short. Worthy Mr. Watson—sure, never had men in our case a better master-gunner; Monsieur Pointis was

but a child to him—made a shift to supply the want with balls of brick coated with lead, wherewith he contrived to do more execution upon the enemy than they with their iron balls heated red-hot upon us.

The prisoners were most eager to learn from me, whenever I went to see them, what effect all this severity produced upon the temper of the citizens—whether they were like to be terrified into submission or no. Faith, I grew prouder of my countrymen every time I had to describe their firmness; for all the Marshal had done was to increase their resolution by the addition of a certain angry constancy that was very noble. The prisoners professed themselves very sorry to hear it, and protested that their sorrow was evidence of their friendship for us.

'For,' they would say, 'the delay will but add fuel to the flame of Rosen's anger.'

'I scarce can see,' I would reply, 'what harm that should do us, or how he can express it save by bombarding us yet more vigorously. At that rate, he will soon be out of both bombs and cannon-balls.'

Colonel Talbot would shake his head at my levity.

'Madam,' he would say, 'you don't know the man you're dealing with. Before you know

what you are doing, he will turn upon you with some new device, so devilish brutal, and at the same time so ingenious, that you'll have nothing for it but to yield, and then—God be good to you! My heart bleeds to think of my countrymen being treated like the poor wretches in Pultowa. Rebels, to be sure, deserve to suffer, but flesh and blood must feel for flesh and blood.'

Once I could not forbear reminding him how far he had been out in his forecast of our fortunes on the day of their great effort to crush us. He admitted it without demur.

'But,' said he, 'you had not then to measure yourselves against one of the ablest soldiers of the age. And you had the hope of the English succour to sustain your courage. Now you have had some evidence of what they mean by you; they're no better than lukewarm in their friendship, and you've seen it. Say as you please, madam—and that's as you think, I am sure—it must have taken the heart from their resistance.'

There was enough of truth in that to put me in some pain for our fate, at such times as I was hearing it all set forth. For it was true that Kirke's retreat had done more to break us than the enemy's arms—ay, and that in more ways than by discouragement. Many of us, in

the joy of sudden and certain relief—so we thought it—had been prodigal of the stores we ought to have husbanded, and up till that time had husbanded, with the greatest care. 'Twas an error of the most fatal; we saw it in all its greatness when it was too late to repair it.

But never did my despondency withstand the first glimpse of the resolute mind of my countrymen. Whether aided from England or left to do their best with their own slender resources, made little difference to the wholeness of their devotion. Each man had set his life on this wager, so it appeared; he would not withdraw it, whatever the odds. Nay, the more overwhelming the odds, the higher rose his heart to defy and contemn them.

For all that, things were come to a sad pass when they risked two lives so valuable to them as Adam's and Captain Noble's upon a single venture. And that was what they now were so desperate as to do.

Tidings must be got to Kirke, all were agreed, of the straits we were brought to; the problem was, how it might be done. A messenger had been found that was willing to endeavour the journey, if means could be devised to get him through the lines of the enemy. 'Twas a little lad—the same that stood so stoutly on the rampart at the side of the bog, and threw stones

at the grenadiers as they were coming up. But, consider as they might, our leaders could at first hit upon no plan that seemed feasible, so close were we hemmed in, and so actively watched.

But yet, they must get the message sent. A messenger from Kirke had contrived to get to us by swimming across the river, so that it was known where he had retired to, which was no further away than to Inch. Many a man of ours would have been ready and willing to attempt the swimming of the river, and did attempt it, too, when Kirke lay in the Lough; but now what good end were served by it, since, when the river was swum, they were but in the enemy's lines the same as before?

Adam and Wamphray, and many another of our captains that we saw much of, went about very moody at that time. If we asked them what they mused upon, it was hard to know what to make of their answers. At last we were given to understand that an enterprise was on foot to rob the fish-houses upon the Isle; and that the boat—there was but one in Derry—was to be made use of.

It had been newly built, to replace the one, the only one, our runaway friends had left us when they went away in Cunningham's fleet, of which the enemy had possessed themselves in a manner that is worth relating, because 'tis a

good instance of their dealings with us, and the faith they observed with heretics. They sent a message to one Captain White, of ours, to desire he would attend a parley—with Lord Lowth, no less—at the Waterside. He did so, and they took him prisoner for his pains, and kept the boat; and so sat safe, as they thought, from any molestation by us at that side of the river. But our men set to work and built them another boat—the boat that now was to be adventured upon an expedition to procure the garrison a change of diet.

It started, according to the plan, as soon as night was fallen dark; but the nights in June are rarely dark enough to let a party pass unseen through their enemy's lines, and this was what our boatful of volunteers meant to attempt, not the fish-houses. Their little messenger was aboard, and their design was to land him at Dunnalong, above the besiegers' camp, so that he might go across country to Inch behind their backs.

It was no better than a forlorn hope from the first. The clear summer night betrayed them to their adversaries, so that they were pursued both by land and water, and hotly fired upon. By the time they came to Dunnalong, 'twas plain that their design was hopeless; so they were even fain to turn back and come to blows

with two boats much greater than their own that were chasing them. One they put to flight, and the other they took captive with all the men that were in her, and towed her in to Derry in the morning. But this was a defeat disguised, for the thing they had at heart they failed in. None of them were killed; but Adam was so battered about the head with bullets that had struck his helmet that he kept his chamber for several days after. And word reached our ears, by one means and another, that Marshal von Rosen was so enraged by this and other instances of what he called our contumacy, that he had vowed to do such a thing to us as should bring us to our knees with the halter round our necks.

CHAPTER XXXV.

MARSHAL VON ROSEN'S DEVICE.

WHAT could he mean to do ?

Every woman of us put the question so often that our very fears began to grow stale through repetition. And then we took to putting it to our friends ; when by some good chance, in the growing press of business, they had any time to spend with us. Mr. Hewson set his wits to work to find us an answer, but fruitlessly. Adam Murray met our conjectures with one of his great, good-humoured laughs.

'It is but one of his threats,' said he. 'He cannot give them up ; they're part of his battery. And he can't bring himself to imagine how little we are terrified by them.'

Wamphray was as much puzzled as we.

'He is doing his utmost now,' said he. 'His lines are as near us as he can bring them without exposing his men to our musket-fire as well as our cannon. We are cut off from intelligence by sea ; and where news can't pass, there's

little chance for anything more substantial. That he is mining we know well enough. They make no secret of it, going about in sight of us with picks and shovels in their hands. But we are on our guard, and the cellars near the walls are patrolled as regularly as the street. They had a fair example of that, too, last night.'

'How was that?' we asked him.

'The people in one of the houses thought they heard the sound of their picks, and reported it to the Governors, who gave directions to drive a counter-mine, which was done. Last night they came through upon each other, and of course fell to blows in their burrows; theirs, being surprised, had no chance from the first, but were routed; all but one or two of them that were killed.'

'No prisoners?' I asked.

'Faith, no!' said Wamphray. 'We have no desire for any more of these, unless they be of consequence sufficient to have their diet sent in to them.'

'Then, you can't tell, any more than we, what are like to be Rosen's intentions?'

'To fright us, I believe,' said he, as Adam had said before him. 'He can't poison the wells, because he can't get at them; and even a barbarous Muscovite hath, sure, some rags of a conscience. Mining, enclosing, and battering

he is doing his best at now, unless, perhaps, he hath some new bomb of unheard-of destructiveness to produce. That's the only thing I can imagine that comes within the resources of civilized warfare.'

What none of us took into consideration was that the restraints of civilized warfare were but a name to this Livonian wild beast, and no check upon his ruthless ingenuity. What his plan was was made known to the council under his own hand and seal upon the last day of June; it sent them home with white faces and angry hearts. But so impossible did it seem to them that he could mean any more by it than a vain threat, that they fell, some of them, to making a mock at it.

Several of them came with my father to our house, and there held a conference of which a word or two came to Rosa's ears and mine; but nothing we could make sense of. It was ended by Wamphray, who desired they would make their minds easy—'for sure,' said he, 'there's no man that hath the least regard for his reputation who would commit such a piece of poltroonery!'

'There is no one,' returned my father, 'who had the least regard for his reputation that would so much as propose it.'

For my own part, and enlightened by the

accounts I had received of the Marshal from some that knew him, I could not but fear that those who gave him credit for any compunction were over-sanguine, and would find themselves mistaken. Speaking of it the next day to my friends among the prisoners, I was confirmed in this view of his character. They knew not what the thing was he had menaced us with, any more than I myself did; but were persuaded that, however bad it might be, it was not too bad for Von Rosen.

'And let me tell you, madam,' said Colonel Talbot, 'that your Governors will do very wrong if, from a fancied sense of honour, they compel the townsfolk to reject his terms, while there's time to make them.'

'Perhaps,' said I, 'if there's compulsion in the case, it is the townsfolk that practise it upon their officers.'

I had told him the same thing a dozen times; but it was more than he could imagine or believe.

'Will you tell me,' said he, 'that Hamilton's proposals—which I hear he threw into the city in a dead bomb, upon the chance that so they might get into the hands of the commonalty—have produced no effect upon their minds?'

'This effect,' I replied to him, 'that if there was the least suspicion that their officers designed to accept them, 'twould be the case of

Lundy over again! Their authority would not be worth a minute's purchase; and I'd be sorry to be he that should warrant them their lives.'

'It's marvellous!' returned the Colonel. 'For I'm told he promised them everything: their lives, their properties; pardon for the past, and protection for the future.'

'Everything,' I rejoined, 'but the one thing they are determined to have, if their lives will buy it. And that is liberty of religion, secured to them by a sovereign who they know will keep his word.'

'A mighty boon, truly!' said the Colonel, 'considering how much the wisest of us knows concerning these mysteries.'

They that were upon the walls early the next morning were speedily enlightened both as to the matter and the reality of the Marshal's threats. Coming over the hill they perceived a great crowd of people, women and children as well as men. Now, 'tis well known for a fashion of the Ultoghs when they go to fight to carry their women and boys along with them; the men slay, the women pillage, despatching at the same time any they come upon that are but wounded. Taking no thought but that this approaching crowd was a mob of that sort, the watch upon the walls brought a gun to bear upon them, and fired it into the thick of them.

Their hearts must have stood still in their breasts when their shot was answered by a dismal cry from the oncomers, beseeching them in their own language to spare their kindred that meant them no harm. They looked upon each other with white faces, asking what it meant, and what the Englishry had to do to come under the walls of Derry ?

They had presently their answer. Armed men began to come into view at the back of the weary crowd of footsore, faltering country-folk, driving them forward at the bayonet's point ; a thing so pitiful to see that some on the walls broke out a-weeping at it. The soldiers drove their prisoners close under the walls, our men not daring to fire at them for fear of hurting their friends. These were the Protestants from the country round about Derry, every one of them with his protection duly made out in James's name, and signed with Richard Hamilton's. Now they were driven from their homes, like cattle to the slaughter, without distinction of age or sex. Some were aged men ; some were tender children ; some were delicate women with infants in their arms ; and some were women less fit even than these for such rough travelling. Privileged non-combatants—ay, and privileged by the enemy's own act and overture—this was how they treated them.

The news of it ran through the town like wildfire. This, then, was what Marshal von Rosen had threatened; this was what our leaders had supposed him incapable of. They knew now of what he was capable, and what his mercy was like to be worth. He that could take our own kindred for his sword, what kind of weapon would he stick to use for his scourge?

In a very short time we were all on the walls, thronging to see a thing which, rather than to see, we had parted with some of our eyesight. The man that had fired the shot at them cursed himself aloud, wishing that the hand might wither that had hurt his friends. At that a clear voice answered to him from the crowd below the walls:

'The Almighty is more merciful to you than your wish, young man,' it said. 'The shot harmed none of us, your kindred, but slew three of the enemy that drove us.'

''Twas the hand of God alone that directed it, then,' said one that stood by. 'For the shot was fired before we could tell the drivers from the driven.'

Never was the mercy of God more needed by any of His creatures than by these hapless folk, when they sat them down in front of the walls of Derry, ready to die for lack of food

and shelter; and willing to die rather than to take them at the price of the town's defeat.

Rosa and I were lost in the crowd at first, and could see nothing but our neighbours that hemmed us in; but after a time we found ourselves close to the parapet, and from that vantage we looked forth upon a very sorry sight. Below us was a group of women seated on the bare ground; but one had thrown herself at length upon it, in a very abandonment, we supposed, of weariness and despair. She was scarce half clothed, and had a shawl wrapped round her as she lay in a manner that hid both her face and form. Another woman sat close beside her, trying to comfort a little tiny child that she held upon her lap. The child hid his face upon her shoulder; we could hear his crying, though it was faint from very misery and fatigue. 'Twas a sight to rend the stoniest heart, and Rosa burst out crying at it.

I take shame to myself to remember it, but with all my pity my heart had room for the basest of selfish thoughts. I was ready to give thanks that in that whole crowd there was no one of mine own kindred by blood! Fellow-sufferers in the same cause, they were akin to me by a tie yet closer; and it was, sure, the meanest heart in the world that took so much as a single moment to recognise it.

My fault was both discovered to me and punished by a single stroke. One that sat bent and listless drew himself suddenly upright; he needed not to turn his face, for with that action I knew him. It was my uncle, and as I was pointing him out to Rosa he rose to his feet, and turned round towards us. Either some movement we made unwittingly, or some other subtler motion of the spirit, drew his eyes to mine. I stretched my hands to him with a cry I could not repress.

'Oh, my dear uncle!' I cried, 'what make you from home—from your safe, quiet home on the other side of the river? Why have they driven you here like a brute beast?'

He both answered my question and rebuked it with a gesture of the hand, pointing round upon the whole crowd of his fellows, all alike in evil case; as though he said: 'That which hath happened to me hath happened to every one of them as well.' The woman beneath me, with the child upon her lap, lifted her eyes to mine, and they were full of a reproach that needed not to be expressed in words.

'Is my son Adam sick?' he asked me, and he spoke in his ordinary voice and with his ordinary manner, 'that he's not upon the walls with the rest of the town?'

'He was here a short time ago,' I told him.

'He's not far off,' said a man that stood near us. 'It's nothing but seeking some remedy for this that has taken the Colonel out of it.'

'Will you go for him?' said my uncle to this man. 'Tell him that I—that his father desires speech of him.'

Certes, it was no easy matter to force a way through the throng upon the walls, but the man was gone in an instant. I looked upon my uncle with wonder. There was a power and authority in his manner that were new to me, much as I had always reverenced and admired the splendid old man. In spite of them my mind misgave me. I wondered what he was about to require of his son. For himself, I knew assuredly, he had never asked relief; but could any man witness the misery of all these helpless creatures—and that with a pity for their sufferings made poignant by reason of his own — without desiring it for them? Were he to ask it of Adam, could Adam refuse? 'Tis true that he was not one of the Governors, but, then, his influence in the council was great. Could he refuse to exert it at his father's request? If he did so, would not that weight, added to their own natural compassion, ensure their compliance? And then what hope for the town?

Living day by day from hand to mouth, as

we were now doing, could we hold out a single week with all these additional mouths to fill? It was evident to the most untrained eye that we could not. Von Rosen's plan grew clearer with every moment's pondering. The price of the lives of our friends must be our own submission; and if we should refuse to pay it, we must bear the torture of seeing them die before our eyes of starvation and exposure.

What neither insult nor weariness, neither pity nor indignation, had availed to do to the old man, namely, to break down his composure, the sight of his son effected in one moment. Breath and speech forsook him both at once; he stretched his hands towards Adam much as I had done to him, unable to utter a single word. As for Adam, strong man as he was, and hardened to the sight of suffering, he was as deeply moved as his father, and it was his father who recovered himself first.

He swept his hand around with the same eloquent gesture he had used to me, including all the prisoners in its circuit.

'Do you see them?' he asked. This time his voice had not the everyday calmness he had preserved before, but rang out like a trumpet. 'Do you see them? Not a man of them but has King James's written promise of safety; not a soul you see but trusted to that when

he remained in the country in Hamilton's power.'

The poor people round him looked up at the sound of his voice, and listened, as we did on the wall, in a sort of breathless silence. Here and there among them there burst forth a sudden sob ; but it was smothered in a moment.

'Do but look at them now,' he continued. 'Mothers, some of them with infants but a few days old ; children scarce able to walk yet ; old men that are all but past it ; creatures that are unable to strike one blow in their own defence, much less to molest his army. Do you know that they were torn out of their beds betwixt the dark and the daylight ; not permitted the time to take one bite to eat, neither sitting nor standing, neither themselves nor their children ? Do you know why they've been driven under your walls like galley-slaves ? That you may feed them with the last of your victual, and so have no more power to resist the thief of the world that has done this in the face of his own promise.'

There was a muttering here and there around us at these words, but it was checked in a moment as my uncle lifted his hand. He had more to say.

'Would you do it ?' he asked passionately. 'Adam—you are a man of some authority, as

I'm told—would you give your voice for taking us in? Would you feed us with your means of holding out? Would you, now?'

He paused, as if waiting an answer, but never a word did Adam return him. A sharp dry sound like a sob broke from him that I think he scarce was conscious of, and that was all his answer.

'Because if you do,' said the old man, and now he spoke with a calmness as great as his late vehemence, 'it is our curse you will earn, and not our blessing. Take good thought that the cause is ours as much as yours. We were too weak, most of us, to fight for it as you can, but we can die for it just as well as you. This is *our* opportunity, and by the Lord that made it for us—ay, and us for it—we adjure you, do not grudge it to us.'

The silence he had imposed continued for a second or two after he ceased speaking, and was then resolved into such a broken cheer as was a fitting answer to such an entreaty, the poor folk round him joining in it to the best of their power. Only the woman below me lifted a face that had some dissent in it.

'Ah, sir,' said she, 'it's main hard on the children.'

My heart melted as she said it, with a pity that was almost a bodily pain.

And now the faces that had been turned to my uncle looked one and all towards Adam; sure, it was not out of any doubt of his answer. His voice was near as low and faltering as a maid's, so that only a very few could have heard his words.

'Father,' said he, 'I thought you were going to plead for them. I know not how I could have endured to refuse you if you had. . . . I know not whether the hard necessity grows easier or harder when you acknowledge it so frankly. Sure, men that sacrifice their lives so nobly to the cause have a double claim on us. But, as you say, even our duty to the weak and helpless must give way to our duty to this cause. But stay,' said he, and upon that word his voice rang out full and clear, 'there must be a way, if one could but find it.'

With that he turned about and was gone through the crowd like an embodied thunderbolt.

I whispered Rosa, and followed him at another kind of pace. The moaning of the hungry child beneath me was become a thing I could bear no longer. Our house was near at hand; I ran to it and brought a loaf of bread and a little bottle of milk, and with some little difficulty made my way back to my place, the crowd being most willing to let me pass;

though it cost some effort, they stood so close together. Then I lowered the basket as secretly as I could to the woman's hand, having first succeeded in catching her attention. She thanked me by a look, as Rosa did by a little sigh and a quick pressure of the hand. Well she knew that her own child as well as mine must be deprived of that which I had given to the strangers, for milk by this time was scarce to be bought for money. But grudging it was the last of her thoughts, as I had known it would be.

We watched our pensioner feeding her child in a furtive, stealthy fashion, afraid to speak to her lest we should betray her; for what I had given to her, though enough for one or two, would have been lost among a number. By-and-by we saw her hand steal under the shawl that hid the face of the woman she sat beside, who still lay prone upon the ground in the very same place and attitude as I had seen her first. I marvelled a little at that stillness, and more at the length of time her friend's hand remained in touch of her without exciting the least movement or response.

'She must be asleep,' said Rosa softly.

I nodded.

But, as if some doubt of that had suddenly assailed her friend, she put her own child

quickly from her, and drew away the shawl that hid the other's face. And then she gave a faint cry of dismay.

'Oh, what's this—what's this?'

We stooped towards her.

'What is it,' I asked her—'a swoon?'

She looked up to me with a blanched face.

'Ah, madam, it's no swoon,' said she, with marvellous quiet; 'this is death; and sure, it is no wonder.'

My uncle, who was not far off, came up to her with some offer of help. She took his hand and wept upon it.

'God bless you for the kindest heart, sir,' said she; 'but none of us can help her now. Ah, sir, you might as well have left her to lie where she dropped at first,' she ended bitterly.

'Was she, then, so sick?' I asked unsteadily.

Without speaking a word, she turned the shawl a little further back, showing me within the clasp of the dead woman's arm, and pressed close to her bosom, a tiny infant, dead like the mother.

'Four days old, lady!' she broke out; 'and they raised her out of her bed and hurried her here like the rest of us. She'd never have got half-way but for this kind gentleman's arm. She slipped and fell upon the hill over there—ah, bad luck to the hard hearts that made her

climb it!—and the babe's head must have struck a stone, I think—'twas living, but that was all, when we put it back into her arms. The soldiers threatened her with their bayonets if she lagged behind. Ah, God's mercy! what's this?' she cried. 'It hasn't been at threats they stopped, wolves that they are!' With that she raised the dead woman's arm, so that we could see it; it had indeed been wounded with some sharp weapon that had pricked it sorely. 'Would you think, ladies,' she said, crying sorely, 'that mothers' sons could find it in their hearts to treat a mother so?'

With that she caught up her own child, that had been all this time crying unheeded, and began to smother it with tears and kisses.

'What was she to you?' I asked her, shocked unspeakably at the sight of such awful cruelty.

'My sister, madam,' said the woman—'my only sister.'

Drowned in tears as she was, she yet took thought to offer a piece of bread to my uncle, who refused it.

'It's a mistake,' said he, looking at us with his brave eyes. 'Our pains will be the sooner over the less we try to escape from them.'

Presently we were aware of a stir among the people on the wall; the poor folk below could see the cause of it, but not we, who were too

much closed in by the throng we stood in. But in a minute more we heard a voice ring out like a trumpet, 'Clear the Double Bastion, there!' 'Twas Colonel Mitchelburne's voice, our new Governor in Baker's place; this was one of the first of his public actions. And the bastion, we heard those say that could see, cleared itself as though a bomb had fall upon it.

Then could be heard a noise of hammer-blows upon wood; 'twas a maddening thing to listen thereto and see nothing. But chafe as we might, there was no help for it; we could but wait in what patience we could muster, until the knowledge filtered through to where we stood that 'twas a gallows our Governors had given orders to erect, and were witnessing the making of. When it was ready to rear up, had a thousand pair of hands been needed to raise it, they had all been found, ready and eager, on the spot. When it was fixed in its place, Mitchelburne's voice rang out again so that all of us could hear it, as well as the poor Protestants to whom he addressed himself.

'If you die there,' said he, 'our prisoners die here. We shall either save you or avenge you.'

Mr. Walker's well-known voice struck in as Mitchelburne's ceased. It was to us on the walls he spoke.

'And I would represent to you,' said he—'I and my colleague, that is—that, to give this our device the smallest chance in the world of succeeding, you mustn't *be seen* to give any assistance to our friends on the outside of the walls. Rosen's purpose is evident, and if he sees we are answering it by helping the others, he will never come to terms with us. If he thinks us as hard-hearted as himself, he may also think it as well to save the lives of his friends that are in our hands by letting ours go home in peace.'

Mr. Walker's mode of saying these words 'be seen' was clearly designed to convey a warning and a permission at once. That the latter was taken advantage of to the utmost our means would allow, no one with a heart in his bosom will require to be told.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE RESULT OF VON ROSEN'S STRATAGEM.

THERE was not one of our officers but was sincerely sorry for the gentlemen they were forced to treat with so much rigour. They were in no way guilty; they had neither been partakers in Rosen's perfidy, nor had they consented thereto. It was nothing but the necessity they lay under to save our poor friends at all costs (if, indeed, it might at any cost be done) that had moved them to threaten them with such a fate.

For my own part, how could I but grieve for persons that were of mine acquaintance—nay, by this time almost my friends—and that were in a plight so evil? There was but one moment of all that day, I think, that my mind was drawn away from the thought of them and of our own friends below the walls, and that was when our children would scarce eat their food for want of the milk to which they were

accustomed. Rosa and I took each her son upon her knee, and told them as well as we could why it was there was none for them. It was no hard task to make them understand, nor yet to make them try to eat their dinner of porridge without it; but the appetite would not answer to the will. The little boys wished to eat as heartily as usual, but they could not. With a stab of the heart, I saw for the first time that they were pining—small wonder, in a town so fœtid and unwholesome as Derry was growing. A day in the fresh country air—in our own pleasant garden, say—was what they needed. Alas! the air of the country was as impossible to procure for them as any other childish luxury, and by this time Derry was bare of such.

The children being fed, however poorly, back came our thoughts to the poor Protestants outside of our walls, and the poor prisoners within. Wamphray, I knew, had orders to attend the Governors to the lodging of these latter. I made so bold as to ask him to take me there before them.

'For,' said I to him, 'if there's any little service I can render them at such an awful time, it were some assuagement of my compassion to do it. And I shall never have another chance.'

The pleasure of the prisoners—I found several of them together, in company with my Lord Netterville—was so great, upon my arrival, that it made me altogether ashamed.

'Madam,' said Colonel Talbot—it was he that commonly made himself their spokesman, in spite of the superior rank of some of the others—'see here. This letter is for your hands.' In effect, he delivered one to me. 'We made so bold—dying men, you know, are apt to assume privileges that perhaps they have no right to—as to ask you to favour us with one more visit before we are taken to Newgate, which, of course, would be no place for you to come. And now, in your goodness of heart, you have forestalled the request.'

'My goodness of heart,' I said with a smile, though a doubtful one, 'would be happy—very happy—if there were any little thing I could do for you; but I fear there's none.'

'None!' quoth he. 'To you, madam, perhaps, what you have done for us may seem nothing. To us, what hath it not been? Fresh air, and health, and liberty—*very near!* The burden of our gratitude was one we were unwilling to carry to the grave unspoken. Now you have added to the list of your bounties this last one, to give us the opportunity to confess our debt, though we can't discharge it.'

'An angel,' murmured Sir Gerard Aylmer, 'could not have been more heavenly kind!'

What had I done for these gentlemen? Nothing, save to treat them as fellow-creatures, though they had been in arms against us. Ah, sure, when so slight a thing can move men to so great thankfulness, there must be easier ways to arrange their differences than by battle!

There came a noise at the outer door of men asking and receiving admittance, and presently entered to us Mr. Walker, attended by two or three more of the council. I would have withdrawn myself with my maid; but it was desired I would not, and I was nothing loath to remain.

Mr. Walker entered at once upon the business that brought him, which was to require the prisoners to be in a readiness to be removed to Newgate, in preparation for the execution. 'Twas but an ungracious task, and so he felt it; for the words came by no means so trippingly from his tongue as commonly, and he seemed shorn of half his self-importance.

Colonel Talbot answered him something haughtily.

'Make no apologies, sir, we beg of you. We have been aware of your intentions all day; they were reported to us near as soon as you had announced them on the walls. We are in

your power, to do as you please with, and can't help ourselves.'

He looked at Adam Murray as he said that last, who reddened angrily, but answered nothing. My Lord Netterville, feeling, I suppose, that the implication were scarce justified, made haste to soften it.

'We are all sensible, gentlemen,' said he, 'of the civility we've been treated with up till to-day. And you must make allowances for our disturbance of mind. Manners can scarce be looked for from men about to suffer for no fault of their own.'

Mr. Walker bowed.

'You'll do us the justice, I'm sure, to believe that it's with the greatest regret we find ourselves forced to copy your commander's methods,' said he. 'He hath much to answer for, for this day's work, and will dearly rue it, if he's a man of any bowels.'

'Sir, he's not,' returned the Colonel bitterly.

'A word in your ear, Colonel Talbot, and gentlemen all,' said Mr. Walker briskly. ''Tis about that very matter I am come, far more than the other. It's hard to believe he will sacrifice your lives, when by undoing his own ill-considered act—which he must bitterly repent already—he can save them.'

'Perfectly hopeless, sir, take my word for it,'

said my lord, who always tried to carry himself jauntily. '"What can't be cured must be endured," is a good working proverb; and it's the one for us, to the best of my belief.'

'For all that,' said Adam, 'we can scarce be wrong in thinking you will be glad to join with us in making the attempt.'

'I fear,' said Colonel Talbot, 'that you don't know the temper of the man you have to deal with. We do. He's a savage.'

'Well, gentlemen all,' said Mr. Walker, ''tis your only chance, and so we warn you. You will, I am sure, absolve us from blame in the matter.'

'Why, man,' my Lord Netterville broke out, 'you're not going to ask us to sign our own death-warrants, are you, or even to approve them?'

'I had no such intention, my Lord Netterville,' said Mr. Walker haughtily, 'but to make you a proposal that I thought might avert your doom. I had,' said he, after a short pause, 'another proposal to make you; we thought you might be anxious to have a priest of your own communion to attend you in your last hours. I'm not wrong there, I see,' for there was a little movement among the prisoners. 'There's none in the town, as you'll scarce wonder to hear; but if you'll write a letter to

your General, the flag that takes our message can take it too, and bring back an answer.'

The upshot was that the prisoners writ a letter to Richard Hamilton, who was represented to have powers equal to or higher than Rosen's, and was a man more like to yield to pity. They represented their case very feelingly, as I thought, who both read the letter and signed it, at my Lord Netterville's urgent request, as his deputy, 'for a hand so merciful,' quoth he, 'should, sure, be a lucky one, and bring us a good answer.'

Lucky hand or none, here is the answer they had:

'GENTLEMEN,

'In answer to yours, what these poor people are like to suffer they may thank themselves for, being their own fault, which they may prevent by accepting the conditions that have been offered them; and if you suffer in this it cannot be helped, but shall be revenged on many thousands of these people (as well innocent as others) within and without that city.

'Yours,

'R. HAMILTON.'

Accordingly, the next day yet more of our poor 'protected friends'—save the protections!

—were driven up under the walls. But yet the Governors were in no hurry to proceed with the execution of the prisoners (who lay that day in Newgate Prison), as knowing that in them lay the one hope of relief to the others. And they had their reward ; for moved either by their condition, should he persist ; or by Richard Hamilton's entreaties (which I cannot think he would withhold in such a cause, whatever or however he might write in a letter of his intentions), or as some say by a letter he had from King James from Dublin, Rosen sent back to their homes the next morning those he had so wickedly and faithlessly torn from them on the Tuesday. That he had such a letter, however, seems scarce within the limit of belief, for how could a courier go and come to Dublin in two days ?

We got rid of a many of our own folk, along with them, that were become too sick and exhausted to be of any use in the city. Good had it been for us if we could have sent all away that were so ; but not only was that impossible, owing to the watchfulness of the enemy, but we had to take from among the others very near as many as we sent away. By reason of the departure of those who left the city, some that lay helpless were deprived of their natural guardians. One of these came

upon my hands; it was the little lad that had his legs carried off by a cannon-ball upon the 13th of May. I had seen him once or twice since his accident, and had admired his constancy in his sufferings, which was that of a man. Now, by Dr. Aicken's request, I took him under my own care entirely, finding a place for him in a house near our own, where I could see him as often as I pleased. This poor child was starved almost to a skeleton, and when 'twas asked of him in my hearing how his friends could bear to desert him in such a plight, his answer brought before our minds a lively picture of the straits the poor among us were even now reduced to.

'Ach, doctor dear,' said he, for it was Dr. Aicken that put the question to him, 'sure, 'tis the stones of the wall that's poor eatin'.'

A few more questions brought out the confession that for days together this poor child, like many and many another in the town, had had scarce a bite to eat that was fit for human food. Even I, that went so much into poor places, had had little notion how keen the want was become until I heard this story.

But was it wonderful? Was it not what was to be looked for? In spite of Lundy's protestations, he had taken no care to victual the town, but the very contrary; and he was

nearer to the truth in what he had told the English officers (though happily we were not near so bad then as he made us out) than in what he said to Captain Browning in my hearing. But when the population of a town springs up in a few days from seven or eight thousand souls to near thirty thousand, it needs small proof that they must either be able to get at provisions speedily and easily, or come with speed still greater to sore distress. As to the first, it was all the care of the besiegers to bar us up from them; that the second was upon us, with all its miseries, every day made more evident.

I well remember an altercation that arose between Mr. Hewson and myself about this very child. 'Twas so usual a thing with him to disapprove of what I did that I cared exceeding little for his opinion, save as it influenced the opinion of others that I valued at a higher rate. It moved me little, therefore, that he took it into his head to pronounce it an unchristian thing in me to bestow so much of my time upon persons that, as he phrased it, were not members of the household of faith; in which black list he counted both my friends among the prisoners and this maimed child. But when he took it upon himself to remind me that we in my father's house were

now put upon rations, for all the world like the garrison, and so to imply that this rule (most reasonable, as I acknowledged it) was broken by such alms as I bestowed upon my cripple and one or two more, 'twas another matter.

'I am not forgetful of it, sir,' I told him, a little haughtily, 'and I assure you that I do not exceed the allowances of my family, though I be dealing with my own property and none of my father's.'

'Your allowances are then too liberal,' quoth he severely; 'and if your duties to your family leave you so much time on your hands——'

'Why, you must see yourself that they do!' I answered, amazed.

'Then I say that you might put it to better use than to spend it upon Papists and others that are far likelier to do you harm than you to do them good. There are those in your own communion that are as much in need both of food and of consolation.'

I looked at the man, who was lean by this time to very haggardness; the explanation both of his leanness and of his rancour flashed across me at once. Not a doubt but, out of his own pittance, he spared every possible morsel to aid some that were in greater need.

'Master Hewson,' I said—and I tried to

speak with great gentleness—'all they that have fought for their faith are of my communion; and I wish—oh, I can't tell you how I wish!—that I had power and wealth enough to extend my alms to every soul that's in want of them!'

He looked at me, as I had done a moment before at him, as one that takes the measure of an antagonist.

'Ay, say you so?' said he. 'Verily, you know not the measure of your own presumption! Would you take away the cup from the lips it is poured out for? And,' quoth he, with a sudden change of tone, 'I hear you took some of the water from Columbkille's Well yesterday to wash his wounds with. That can't be true, even of you?'

'It is,' I said; 'for I did.'

'Woman,' said he—sure, never man so swelled with indignation—'do you know the price of it? Do you know that it was drawn at the peril of a maiden's life?' This was true; for the sharp-shooters lay in wait every morning for those that went—as all must go or send—to these wells for their supply of drinking-water. ''Tis the same price,' said Mr. Hewson, 'that was paid for that draught of water that was brought to King David from the well of Bethlehem that was at the gate; a draught that he

judged too costly for any use but the sacred one of sacrifice to God.'

'Ah, sir,' said I, 'King David knew not, as we do, what God's own voice should say, when it should be heard in earth's familiar speech, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye did it unto Me."'

I spoke with the extremest gentleness; for, indeed, I felt no anger against him any more. He regarded me with an uncertain countenance for a moment, and then turned into the house without another word. But whether it was anger or a dawning comprehension that kept him silent, I could not tell.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A WELCOME MESSENGER.

And now a pestilence began to be rife in the town; and no wonder, reeking as it was with the stench of too hasty and too frequent burial. Even that, perhaps, was scarce so fertile a cause of it as the kind of food that the people were forced, for very famine, to eat; 'twas most revolting to hear of, not to say to make use of. A contribution was set on foot, as had been done before, for the poor of the town. All they that had, gave; but what was private benevolence among so many starving creatures?

And yet no sign of relief. 'Twas longed for; 'twas prayed for, and that continually; but I think—among some, at least, in the town—it was scarce hoped for any more.

Every day the people perished by tens, by dozens, by scores; not only among them that had been smitten with the pestilence, but among the rest as well—men that but for the famine

had been well enough. And among them all there was but one wish—a wish so strong that it annulled the pains of death to some of them. Men that died in the cruel pangs of the sickness would half forget them while they besought their survivors to hold out to the last like themselves. Men that fell upon the street from sheer weakness, and died where they fell, would gather the last of their strength together, and spend it upon the city's watchword, 'No surrender!' The cause was become wife and child to such; the one care they carried with them to their graves was lest they should be baulked of the reward they had paid so dear for—to wit, its triumph, and the freedom of their country. And with every such death that care of theirs became a more sacred trust to such as were left to take it up.

Now were Dr. Aicken's hands full indeed; and now, though I would, perhaps, if left to mine own choice, have desired to stay more in the house, since the streets were become so noisome, I found it impossible to withdraw from my nursing.

My Lord Netterville was left almost entirely in my charge, for his own chirurgeon ceased to come to a place so plague-stricken; and Dr. Aicken could make him but one visit in the two days, and not always that. What my lord

had done to his hand, I know not—perhaps it was but the trouble of his mind that acted on his wound; but from what cause soever, it broke out at this time as bad as at first, and far angrier. I could not be unconcerned to see so much suffering, and to think that more might be in store for him—even the loss of the hand itself. But the case of Colonel Talbot was as much harder than his as pain of mind is than pain of body. Trouble that may have a term and pass is a small thing, however sharp, to trouble that hath neither hope nor remedy. And that this was Colonel Talbot's case became plainer every day. He had been a sick man when he came into Derry; he was now a dying one—dying on his feet, like the soldier he was; and 'twas no more than common humanity in Mr. Walker to endeavour his release as he did, though, sure, never man raised himself a finer crop of enemies by any good action.

His lady had offered us five hundred pound for his ransom; had it lain in my choice, he should have gone free for nothing. 'Twas too hard upon both of them that he should be shut up here, deprived of the care of his wife when most he needed it; while she was well aware of his state, and yet could do nothing for him. My own case sharpened my sympathy for them, and sometimes I could not check a silly super-

stition that assailed me—that as it fared with him in Derry, so it fared with Captain Hamilton in Paris; that if the one should perish, so likewise should the other. I blamed myself much for a thought so rootless and bootless; but, for all that, it returned again and again.

I think it was in returning from their lodging one day that I found myself accosted, not by a word, but by a smile; 'twas on the face of an old acquaintance of mine, the last I thought to meet in the streets of Derry—Gorman O'Cahan. That he was a prisoner was evident, for a soldier of ours had him by the arm on each side. Two grown men to one small lad—'twas, sure, an extravagance of caution! For all he was so guarded, his smile had the old good-humour and frankness, and the old dimensions as well; it put me into the strangest yearning recollection of freedom, and fresh air, and Cloncally. I stopped him and his guards, and spoke to him.

'Why, Gorman,' said I, 'are you a prisoner? I scarce thought you would have been among our enemies.'

'It's before the Governor I'm going, *anny way*,' quoth he. 'At me own request, I may tell you. It's to drive me back among the inimy with me wounds in the *rare* they'd have done, the murtherin' blackguards! only that I

told them I was a friend of his, and he'd nivver forgive them if they deprived him ov the pleasure ov my company.'

'Tis impossible to render the roguish drollery of this child, whose face had all its old faculty of expressing twice as much as he said. He set me laughing in spite of all the reasons I had for gravity.

One of the guards spoke up and told me how the lad had put himself in the way of capture, and how, suspecting him of being a spy, they would have driven him back to the enemy, as he said, but for his request to be taken before the Governors. He could not take it upon himself, the man said, to refuse such a request, made with so much assurance.

'You were right, I'll warrrant you,' said I to the man. 'I know this lad of old, and have had reason to think him a true man.'

'Ye hear that, ye mistrustful *thaives?*' said the boy, with a sudden assumption of importance. 'Now, perhaps, it's to let me walk without your kind assistance you'll be plazed to do.'

In effect, the men ceased to hold him by the shoulders. He looked at them with a comical face of triumph, but remained between them as he was.

'And how's the little jantleman, me lady?' he asked of me.

'Come and see for yourself,' said I, 'when your interview with the Governors is over.'

It was not long till he came, and was delighted to find Roland had not forgotten him, but had for him as much friendship as ever. A fine game of romps he would have treated him to, and, indeed, began it, but the child had neither strength nor spirits to bear his part.

Gorman took him up in his arms.

'What's the matter with the little jantleman?' he asked of me, with an anxious face.

I had not a word to answer.

'There's naething wrang wi' him but the heat,' said Annot Wilson sharply.

'That and the stench together, maybe,' said the lad; and fell to dandling Roland in his arms, whereat the child began to stroke his face and beseech him to carry him home to Cloncally.

'Twas the same chord that had been touched in mine own mind, and it took some soothing in mine arms to make him forget its imperious music.

'Where are you going to sleep to-night?' I asked presently of Gorman.

'At home, av your ladyship plaises,' said he.

'That's impossible, my lad,' I told him. 'Don't you know that you won't be permitted to pass out of the gates without the Governors' written pass to show you are no spy?'

'It's that same I have in my pocket,' said Gorman, with one of his sidelong, expressive glances towards the children's women, as though to warn me that no more could be said in their presence.

Needless to say that I found another and a more private opportunity to hear all he had to tell me before he quitted the house.

'You'll kape it perfectly sacret, me lady,' he began, 'for it's a spy I have to pass myself off for when I fall in with anny of the inimy. But ye know I can carry a message, don't ye ?'

'Indeed I do,' I returned, 'and owe you some thanks for the last you brought me, too.'

'Nivver spake ov it, lady darlint—nivver spake ov it,' said the boy. 'Look at me,' he went on; ''tis meself that's not much like a messenger from a great Gineral to a brace of Governors, is it now ?'

'You certainly are not,' I said, unable to forbear laughing, less at the lad's words than at the look wherewith he pointed them, which at every moment expressed a deeper cunning and more enjoyment of the same.

'Well now,' said he, 'that's the very raison I've been able to bring the message. I'd nivver have got here at all, at all, if it had been a dacent, respectable creature I looked, for there's a thief ov a sintry at ivvery hedge for a mile.

round the town, and 'tis a dozen times, at laste, they stopped me and questioned me. Sure, av I hadn't been able to change words wid them in the Irish, it's nivver at all I'd have got past thim, and that's the truth. But, betwixt that and the looks of me, it never entered their heads that I'd been let into Derry, let alone to the officers' council.'

'Truly, Gorman,' said I, 'I can scarce believe it myself.'

'It's meself,' said Goman, grinning, 'that's much of the same mind. 'Tis the truth, for all that,' he continued, 'and not a word of a lie. It's Gorman O'Cahan, and nobody else, that has brought Gineral Kirke's letter to thim gentlemen at the council-hall.'

'A letter!' said I, astonished.

'A letter, no less,' returned the boy, twinkling with whimsical pride in his achievement.

'But how in the world——' I exclaimed.

'No difficulty in life, me lady,' said he, clapping his hand on his leg. 'I folded it into me garter an' tied it round me leg. Sure, whin the leg got into the town, the letter wasn't left behind, an' the answer I'm to carry back is sewed into the belt of me breeches.'

'Why,' said I, 'you have done well and bravely, Gorman, and have brought to a good end an errand that many a grown man has

failed in. Were I the General, you should name your own reward when you deliver the answer into his hands.'

'Sure enough,' said he; 'that's what wan of the Governors—him that has a love for the sound ov his own voice—said whin they gave it to me. But, indade, I'd nivver have had the assurance to name the reward the General has promised me already, and that's a commission in the army, for all so simple as I stand here.'

'Truly,' said I, 'I can't see how he could offer you less.'

It may be some offset to Kirke's many misdeeds that he kept his word in this matter; and, sure, if ever peasant earned his gentility, it was this child, by bringing to the town, at the very nick of time, the encouragement they needed.

For the famine grew sorer and sorer. The rations to the garrison were gone down to a little meal, with tallow and spice—they made it into a kind of pancakes, and I believe it was of benefit to their health. But they received of it but barely enough to keep the life in them; so that now the men began to die by scores every day. What Hamilton's soldiery had never been able to do—namely, to exact an equivalent in our men's lives for those we slew of them—those terrible allies of his now

set about doing, and did thoroughly: Colonel Talbot himself told me that a man of their guard fell down under his arms and died in the doorway of their lodgings; whereupon he began to remonstrate with the rest, desiring to know why they chose to endure such hardships rather than to return to their allegiance to their natural Prince. Whereupon the sergeant bade him hold his peace; 'Lest,' quoth he, 'I be not able to restrain my men, and you, though a prisoner and privileged person, come by some hurt which I can't prevent.'

And yet the case of this gentleman was much more pitiable than that of those he was so concerned for; since, if their lives were sacrificed, 'twas for a cause whereof the worthiness was known and confessed, and could not be gainsaid; while his was thrown away for the sake of one whereat he scoffed.

One thing that very greatly sustained the hearts of some of us at this time was the appearance of a lovely star, so marvellous brilliant that it was visible in the daylight; which, sure, was an unheard-of thing, and not far short of miraculous. I think I felt more encouraged and strengthened by the sight of it before I learnt that the enemy saw it as well as we, and regarded it, as we did, as a heavenly signal of speedy victory.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A RIOT, AND A GREAT MISFORTUNE.

And now I come to recall the memory of a day so blue and clear above as to make it a thing scarce credible that foulness or any kind of strife should exist under such a sky—so noisome and painful upon earth that it was as hard to believe that the sun still shone in heaven. 'Twas yet early, and the air so still that every little sound was clear to the ear, like pebbles to the eye in pure water. All of a sudden we were aware of a muffled kind of rioting not far off; and presently there burst into Butchers' Street, in a disorderly fashion, a multitude of people of all sorts. Faith, there was but one sort of face among them, for all that, and it was a face of anger and suspicion; but one kind of voice, and that was hoarse with rage and weak with fasting; ay, and but one kind of figure, and that was the leanest men can be brought down to not to die of it. Miserable starved

wretches they were, ghastly to look upon; and what they fain would have made shouts of anger so died away in their throats that they were as pitiful to hear as an infant's wail of pain. They crowded about Mr. Walker's house, which was but two doors off from ours, with every expression of discontent and mistrust. It made me sorry to see some of the soldiers among the mob. The Governor had deserved better at the hands of these men than suspicion and insult.

Mr. Walker was not in his house; but for all that they would not be denied entrance, and for the best part of an hour as many of them as could get within the doors of it searched it from garrets to cellars. Not a thing did they find to justify their suspicions or reward their search; a few bottles of mum and cider (which Mr. Walker was entitled to for his own use) they found and took to the common storehouse. But as to that abundance of provision of all sorts which some of his enemies had told them they should find in his possession, they found none of it, but had their trouble for their pains. When they were satisfied they had been misled, they began to disperse, ashamed, no doubt, of having harboured thoughts so unworthy of a man that had from the first been among their staunchest friends.

Margery was most desirous that I would delay my going out until they were all gone out of the street; and so I did, as we both supposed. For I was impatient to be gone, and have finished, and be back again, free to spend the rest of my time with mine own son, who needed me now as much as anyone else. I could not shut mine eyes to the fact that he was wasting day by day; and could I have found anyone to relieve me of the duties I had undertaken, I had never, I think, stirred from his side. I could find none that would or could; but I warrant no woman that is a mother will need to be told that I loitered not about my work, and hated to be delayed either when going out or when returning.

The first moment, therefore, that Margery judged it safe, we left the house, she carrying in her hand a little basket that had in it the very frugal breakfast intended for my little cripple. Simple as it was, and scanty (being but a bowl of porridge), it was wholesome; had he been fed on the offal that his neighbours were by that time glad to eat, he had been dead weeks ago. 'Twas an hour past the time, we knew he would be in pain what was become of it; and from that reason, I suppose, joined to our own impatience, we reconnoitred not the street as we should have done before

venturing into it. Thus we overlooked a score or more of ragged, haggard creatures, both men and women, that had sat them down for very weariness about Mr. Walker's door.

A kind of stifled shout rose from them as we appeared in the doorway, so that for a moment I think we were both minded to turn back into the house. Then we thought it unwise to show mistrust. I suppose that Margery shared my feeling, or assuredly she had not hesitated to pluck me back by the arm; and we stepped out into the street instead, with all the appearance of confidence we could muster up.

As Margery closed the door behind me, an old woman rose from the side of our own door-post, and laid her hand upon my arm with a gesture that was almost a threat. I knew her for a wretched creature that lived in a garret of the very house we were going to; many a time she had watched us coming and going to tend the wounded lad, and many an alms she had had of me, both in money and in food; and once or twice I had wondered that, when so many persons like herself had left the town from time to time, she had remained to share our miseries. Perhaps it was that she had nowhere to go outside the walls; perhaps some hope of booty withheld her, if we should be worsted in the long-run. Whatever the cause,

here by ill-luck she was; and, what was worse, she knew me and guessed my errand.

'Stop, Mrs. Hamilton,' quoth she to me—'stop, my beautiful Rose of Derry. Troth, the rose is something wilted and faded by the late heats'—and thereat she laughed in a fashion that made me shrink from the touch of her hand—'but not so much,' she continued, 'as if, like some of her fellows, she had borne the burden of the day; she hath had her shelter, while they have been out in the glare of the sun. Here be some of them,' said she—and with that she beckoned the people that had been at Mr. Walker's door when we came out, and now were gathered about Margery and me—'they've got neither bite nor sup out of the Governor's house—the divvle fly away with him for an old cheat!—but maybe there's something in Mistress Margery's basket that's better than nothing at all.'

We were quite surrounded before she had done speaking, and no retreat possible. Words of rebuke came not readily to my lips, for if ever human beings stood in deadly need, these did. Before I found them, the basket was snatched from Margery's hand, and that restored both my breath and my voice.

'Give it back!' I said to those near me. 'There's food in it, truly, but so little!—scarce

enough for one of you, and of no use at all among so many. Give it back! 'Tis for the poor lad that lost his legs in Pump Street. You can't rob a child, I'm sure, and a wounded child, too, that took his hurt in this very quarrel. She shall go into the house, and bring you out whatever we have that is ready to eat.'

The man that had it—the leanest creature, I think, of the whole lean crew—would have given it back at my words, and held it forth towards Margery. But a dozen hands clutched at it, and tore it from him. There was food in it, and they were scarce more than embodied hunger. They could not bear to part with it, even upon the promise of more. I saw the wolf rising in their eyes, I saw some more of the same starved brotherhood coming back into the street from the Diamond, and I was afraid of them.

'Let us go back into the house,' I said, 'and I promise you—I promise you, I say—to bring you out something to eat—something for every one of you—if you will but wait quietly where you are.'

They released me. Margery was opening the door with shaking hands, for, indeed, the people were scarce human any more, and knew not themselves what they were ready to do. And I believe they had waited quietly enough,

had it not been for the wretched woman that had set them on at first.

'Are you such sheep?' she screamed. 'Will you be content with her dole, when you might go in and help yourselves? Why should she have abundance, when we have nothing at all?'

Abundance! I thought. If she could but have known how spare our diet was become!

'Abundance—yes, abundance!' she shrieked, as if in answer to my thought. 'So much that it's my Lady Bountiful she can afford to play, while we haven't a bite to put betwixt our teeth, and don't know where to lay our hands on one, unless we search her cellars. And why shouldn't we do that same? Is it fighting men they are, that must be nourished though the rest of us starve? Divvle a hair of them! but useless mouths, the same as ourselves. If it's mouths we are, all the same together, then my word is share and share alike.'

I was not ignorant of the value of firmness and a manner of authority among such people, and I did my best to exercise them. But Margery and I were not alone in the doorway; more than one of the rioters had forced their way to it as well as we, so that we could neither go in ourselves nor shut them out but with their leave.

'Stand back, friends, if it please you,' said I,

and I think I said it with no appearance of fear. 'If you will be patient for a minute or two, and keep order, you shall have what I promised you. If not, I will not give you a crumb.'

'Maybe we will not ask you,' shrieked the woman that had constituted herself our special enemy—Heaven knows for what reason, for I had never harmed her, nor even addressed her, save to befriend her. At her words, the man that stood next to me caught me by the arm. In spite of myself I was daunted, and began to plead with them.

'There's not a man in Derry can be ignorant,' I said, 'of what we have done—my family and I—and how largely contributed to the public service. No family in the city has given more —none so much, I believe, whatever she may say of us. Will you harm your friends? No; the men of Derry are made of other stuff. As for our abundance that is left—look here!' and I thrust out my hands to them; I pushed back my sleeves, to show them mine arms, where the bones stood out as gaunt as their own. 'That woman,' said I—and I pointed to her—'hath more flesh on her bones than I.'

'Perhaps,' said a man that stood in front of me. 'But you have food to spare, that you give away.'

'Ay, and hath since ever the dearth began,'

said mine enemy maliciously. 'I have reason to know that same.'

'You have; and to be thankful for it, too!' said Margery angrily. 'Look at my mistress, said she, in a voice that would be heard. 'I'll tell you—what she never will—where that food comes from that she gives away. Though we be not fighting men, we are on rations the same as they, and it was some of my mistress's own allowance she was taking to that poor lad, who now will get none.'

She would have said more; but the door was drawn a little further open, and a basket put into her hand by one of my father's women, who, I think, had heard the altercation, and had gathered together all the food she could find, that we might distribute it among the mob, and so pacify them.

Alas! she knew not the wolfishness of hunger. Before Margery could so much as open the basket, it was snatched from her hands like the other, and emptied in a moment. Then began a scuffling and snatching among the poor wretches themselves, who, one had thought, had scarce had strength for it; so that the food, which, had it been shared, had afforded some relief to every one of them, was seized by the strongest, struggled for by the others, and wasted in the struggle. Some ran off with

what they had laid hold of; some fell to cursing because they could get none. 'Twas gone before we could secure the door, which was thrust open in our faces by some of the people, whom the sight and then the loss of the food had driven perfectly frantic.

One man in particular was most violent; 'twas he that had been about to give back Margery's basket when it was torn from his hands. By this time he was driven clean beyond his own control. He held me by the arm, and in his frenzy he knew not how he bruised me; nor I myself, neither, till later.

'Oh, 'tis wicked! 'tis shameful!' said he; and his voice came hoarse and sobbing from his lips. 'You can't despise me, my lady, more than I despise myself. You've done much for us, and there's none of us but knows it. 'Tisn't the like of you, that denies yourself to feed them that has no claim on you, that we should rob! But you—you've always had one meal of meat in the day, at least. It was yesterday at noon that I had my last bite, and that was but the third part of a cat as starved as myself. May God strike me dead where I stand if I've touched food since! Flesh and blood,' quoth he, 'can hold on no longer. Have you no help for me, for the love of Heaven!'

Another man held out his hands to me with

a sob, much as I had held out mine own a few minutes before.

'Look at you, lady, you said,' quoth he. 'I say, look at me—look at these hands! Is it human they are, or bird's claws?'

'Oh, my lady,' cried another, 'it's my children at home that are dying of hunger! Haven't you a bite to spare for them?'

'Margery, Margery,' I whispered to her (part in fear, for, indeed, the men were desperate, but more, I thank God, in pity), 'go into the cellar and fetch me out as much meal—of mine own, mind—as will be some relief to every one of them.'

She turned quickly into the house to do my bidding, but not so fast but that she heard the wretched creature who had caused all this violence say another wicked thing.

'You'll repent your folly to-morrow,' said she to those about her, 'if you don't help yourselves now when you have the chance.'

Margery turned back to my side; she faced them without a trace of fear or anger.

'I'll go,' said she, in a clear voice, 'the moment you stand back out of the house orderly, like yourselves. And I hope you'll take what I bring you like men, and not tear it away like wild beasts and waste it.'

Her words had so good an effect upon the

men next to us, who were mostly decent folk gone wild with extremity of famine, that they began to stand back out of the house as she bade them. But, God help us! there were others in the crowd of a lower sort, on whom the words of the wretched woman had more power than hers, and these were driven quite frantic by this appearance of yielding. Some of the gauntest, most famished, and most ruffianly burst through the rank of those that were drawing back from the door; one of the most frightful of them all thrust himself close in front of me with a curse.

'Have you meal in your cellar?' said he, and his voice was in itself a threat. 'Have you meal? Answer me!'

'Deny it,' whispered Margery in mine ear. And 'Deny it' whispered mine own fears, for who could say where the spoiling might cease if once these rioters came within the house?

But how could I? And even if I could have framed my lips to a lie, where had been the use, since we had as good as confessed possession already in promising them help? Whether 'twas her whisper or my hesitation, I know not, but the man blazed out into a fury, and would not be denied his answer.

'The truth,' said he—'the truth, as you shall answer to God for it.'

And, as I am a gentlewoman, he shook me by the shoulder as one might shake a wayward child.

I drew myself away from him with a heat of indignation as great as his.

'Yes, we have,' said I; 'but I will not show you where to find it, nor will she.'

He turned towards the rest with a kind of brutal laugh.

'Come along, mates,' said he. 'I reckon there are others that will.'

For behind us he saw the terrified faces of my father's maid-servants, and the next moment he and his company were thronging past us into the house. Alas! they knew but too well where they should find the cellars, and that in the cellars they should find the food.

The man that first had spoken to me stood between us and the rest, warding off many a thrust that might have hurt us. He did not offer to follow the others, but neither would he permit me to do so.

''Tis useless, madam,' said he; 'you could do nothing to restrain them. You would but come by some injury.'

'Oh, Margery,' I said, 'if it were but possible to satisfy them with what I have of my own, that so they might leave my father's untouched!'

'I doubt not but it might have been,' said

she bitterly, 'had you said no, as I asked you. Mrs. Murray and Annot ran down the passage together. I make no doubt but they went to get as much as would have satisfied them. Now it's too late.'

Her words hurt me as though I had been struck in the face. I could not help but shrink, and she saw it. The man that stood beside us both heard what she said and saw my wincing; he looked so remorseful that I was grieved for him afresh. Somehow I could not bear that he should be disappointed the third time of the food he so sorely needed.

I desired he would let me go, and he did. I went into the kitchen, where I found no one but a frightened maid in tears. But as Margery had supposed, there stood a great bucket of meal upon the table.

'Hide that,' said I to the maid; and she sprang to her feet to do it.

But before she took it away, I took from it as much as filled a little porringer, which I carried out and gave to the man I pitied. Now that I look back upon it, I see it was a thing I had no right to do, considering the loss I had brought upon my father. But at the moment I did not once remember that, or cast a thought to it.

'Take this,' I said to him; ''tis the last, no

doubt, I shall ever have to bestow. And get yourself gone into safety, lest they deprive you even of that when they return.'

The man sprang to his feet (for he had sat down upon the doorsill) with a kind of terror in his face.

'What have I done?' said he. 'God forgive me! what have I done? But,' quoth he, with a quick and resolved gesture, 'it's not too late to repair it perhaps even now.' And so was gone as quick as his weakness would permit.

I turned to go to mine own chamber, but could get no further than to the dining-room, because of a weak and dizzy feeling that took me at the heart. And the rioters were coming back, having ransacked our cellars; I heard both their voices and their steps. Scarce knowing what I did, I closed the door of the room to avoid seeing them despoil us of our little store. A little store indeed it was shrunk to, chiefly by reason of successive gifts towards the subsistence of these very people. Now it was gone altogether, and what were we to do?

How long I stood alone in the room I never could tell, being quite wrapt up in fighting with mine own weakness. I could hear nothing, for the singing in mine ears; see nothing, for the dazzling of mine eyes; remember nothing and feel nothing, for the throbbing of my heart. I

was but making my way slowly to some kind of clearness, when the door opened sharply, and my father entered, with Mr. Hewson just behind him.

'What's this?' said he. 'Mary, can you tell me what it means?' I followed his pointing with mine eyes, and beheld through the window the crowd without parting the spoil of our house among them. 'What does it mean?' repeated my father, trying in vain to speak calmly.

For all I could do, I could not call a word to my lips to answer him withal; I could but babble like a yearling child. Had it been but mine own property that had been taken, I protest I scarce had cared at that moment; but to ruin all the rest was too bitter.

I would fain have thrown myself upon my knees, but was let by a fear lest it might be taken for a coward begging of pardon, when to be forgiven was the last of my thoughts. Had reparation been in my power by means of any sacrifice, I would have grasped at that; it had been a very medicine to me.

But my father, unable to comprehend my silence, was angered at it.

'Why, girl,' said he sharply, 'you are no baby to be frightened out of your wits! Put a force upon yourself, and tell me what you know.'

The power came with the command, and

I began, in broken fashion, to tell him what had passed. Half dazed as I was, I could yet mark his indignation rising higher and higher, and Mr. Hewson at his back listening with inscrutable countenance to every word. It made me the more unsparing to myself. 'Tis true that I had meant no harm; but, alas! it was true no less that through me this irreparable loss and damage had come upon them.

My father hath been a passionate man in his youth; and his indignation, rising higher with every word I spoke, carried away the acquired composure and restraint of his speech.

'God's curse, woman!' said he; 'you can't mean the thing you say? I quarrel not with your right to dispose of your own as you thought fit; but mine—you were never, sure, so criminal as to give up mine as well?'

I looked at him as steadily as I could for the blankness that would come between mine eyes and the thing I tried to fix them on.

'There was no way to keep them separate,' said I. 'I cannot make you understand.'

'No way to keep them separate!' said he. 'Then, why didn't you refuse them help till you could grant it without ruining the rest of us? Do you know what you have done? We must beg in the streets now, like them that have spoiled us.'

Mr. Hewson came between us with a question on his lips. My father cast himself down upon a chair, and took his bent head between his hands; his sorrow was worse to bear than his anger. The whole world seemed as 'twere turning to mist about me, into which I was sinking, and must sink for ever—no shore, no straw to catch at; the one solid thing in the world of vapour was my knowledge that I had done an injury not to be estimated to those I loved best in the world.

Mr. Hewson's harsh voice recalled me from it.

'Let us understand, madam,' said he, in his most judicial manner. 'Did you give up the stores to the rioters?'

'No, no,' I said. 'I would sooner——'

And there I stopped, not choosing to say, what was the truth, that I would first have taken my death at their hands.

'What happen'd, then?' said he. 'Speak to be understood!'

His stern voice helped me far more than mine own will. I gathered all my strength together with a strong effort.

'He asked me—the ringleader,' I said—'if we had any meal. He would not be denied an answer. Had I been able to escape from them into the house, I would have brought out mine own, and given it to them. I meant it—I

promised it,' I said, willing that he should know the truth. 'But when I confessed we had it, they would not wait a moment—they broke into the house, and sought it out; they were not to be withstood in their frenzy. Could I lie?' I ended, driven to excuse me at the last. 'Mr. Hewson, could I lie?'

''Tis to your credit that you did not,' said he, almost gently; 'you were nowise to blame. Sir,' he repeated, turning to my father, 'your daughter hath been in no way to blame.'

Mr. Murray slowly lifted up his head.

'No,' said he, 'she was not to blame; she could not help herself. I have wronged you, Mary,' said he, 'and I ask your pardon.'

I would fain have gone to him, but my feet were heavy as lead, and I could not stir them; I know I tried to stretch out mine arms to him, but whether they obeyed my will I cannot tell. Mr. Hewson's comprehension (from whom I looked for nothing but more blame) broke me utterly down. That vapoury universe seemed to rise up all about me, and cut me off from the land of the living. I neither saw nor heard them any more, nor could thank Mr. Hewson for his championship, nor could answer my father's words. I heard a noise in the street without; then that, too, was swallowed up in perfect blankness.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

DARKNESS AND DAWN.

I CAME to myself to a sound of muffled weeping, whereat I faintly wondered; and to a feeling of the most leaden weariness, so that it seemed a scarce tolerable labour merely to lie still. Margery was moving about me—'twas her grieving that I heard; she was blaming herself in the cruellest manner for the unmannerly words she had used to me. I tried to comfort her, scarce remembering or caring what it was she had said; but neither words nor thoughts would come to my call, so that I was fain to desist before I had well begun.

'The poor lad?' I roused me to ask.

'I'll see to him, madam, if you will but lie still and rest,' she answered. 'He shall have his portion to-day, at any rate.'

'But how?' said I. 'Have we anything left?'

'Oh yes,' said Margery. 'One of these poor creatures, smitten with remorse, ran and fetched

the guard; they came up just as the rioters were busy parting their booty in front of the house. Some of it was already carried away; but they saved some for us, and now the poor starving wretches will reap the reward of their madness. I could find it in my heart to be sorry for them.'

So, I thought drowsily, could I; but I could not muster up the vigour to make sure. To bestir myself, either in mind or body, was beyond my strength; so letting Margery have her will with me, I turned my face from the light and closed mine eyes.

'Bring Roland,' I said to her, 'when 'tis his bedtime, and lay him to sleep in mine arms;' and upon her promise—ere she had finished making it, I think—I fell into the deepest and most dreamless sleep that ever I knew.

When I woke, it was dark night, and silent; my son was in mine arms, and I could hear his breathing. My brain was as clear as a chart, and, faith, the darkness round about me was quickly bright enough with its pictures, drawn in colours of fire against the gloom. Over and over again came before me the whole spectacle of that day; no sooner was it finished than it began again. I would fain have turned my thoughts to something else less sorrowful; but they were like a prisoner bound upon the wheel,

that could not get away from the one ghastly circle. Round and round it went, in my own despite; the details that slipped out of view at one turning starting into stronger clearness the next. The man that had tasted no food for four-and-twenty hours, 'twas he that was the chief figure at one review of it; the next, 'twould be he that had a starving child at home, and not a crumb to give it; after that, again, 'twould be the gaunt, leaden-hued faces and skeleton figures of the crowd, which were but examples of what men were coming to everywhere throughout the city. How deep the want had grown! how uncomplaining, for the most part, it was borne! Nay, the more I pondered it, the less could I blame those that had spoiled us. In their hard case, might not I myself have broken away from mine own control? Doubtless it was righteous that they should suffer for it, else rioting might break out everywhere. But also, thought I, let him that knows nothing of the pinch of their misery condemn them; not I.

Had there been none dependent upon my store but myself, how gladly could I have shared it with these my brethren, and then, if relief came not, have died beside them! But at that I took my child's thin hand in mine, and felt that him I could not sacrifice.

And yet there were other mothers in Derry than I. With some of these it was come to this pass, that their children were dying of want before their eyes. What help for them, if succour were delayed much longer? What help for any of us, indeed?—a few days longer or shorter, what did it amount to? If we were doomed in the end, why should we prolong the struggle? Nay, if we were verily doomed, to what purpose was the pain borne already? Lost and wasted, like so many lives; cast into a gulf without a bottom, wherein nothing could be effected though we should toss as many more after them.

And God—the God in whom we had relied, for whose service, as we supposed it, we had ventured both ourselves and our friends—what was His part in this quarrel? cared He nothing for all we had suffered and were suffering? cared He nothing, or less than nothing, for us, that suffered so much? 'Twas the suggestion of a fiend. For I could not say yea or nay to it, but lay the passive witness of the same phantom dance of remembrance and questioning that had beset me on my awakening. A blackness as of the blackest cloud enwrapt me. I feared as I entered into that cloud, and with reason. For therein I was parted from all I had ever held for Divine; every landmark

seemed to be rooted up; everything that had formerly seemed true and certain now seemed matter of doubt. Clear light to walk by seemed an unattainable blessing; if, indeed, it were not rather a foolish dream that could never be realized. What we had taken for it was but the misleading flashing of aimless lightning, I thought at that moment; shifting brilliancy that might destroy us, but could never guide.

Sunstreaks of happier thought, rays of light from the knowledge of the righteousness of our cause, might play upon the fringes of the storm; but they could not pierce its darkness. In that was I wrapt up past enlightening; tost to and fro past calming; tortured by the revelation of our warfare's cost in human misery—ay, and in human integrity as well;—witness the conduct of these rioters, that had been upright people once, till hunger transformed them into wild beasts. Was it justifiable? Nay, was it even worth our while? If our God were verily one that cared so little for our suffering—if the righteous and the wicked were equal in His eyes and alike in His regard—if 'twas indeed all one to Him whether we toiled with bleeding feet in the way He seemed to have set open before us, counting no cost; or passed it by unheeding at the word of human command; was His service

any sufficient reward for all our toil? Surely, no! Was, then, religion after all no better than a trackless maze?—and the hope of a clue to guide us no more than a frantic dream?

I laid my hands upon my child, sleeping by my side, as though to stay myself upon my love for him. Alas! here was no abiding rock, but shifting sand like all the rest; for if all else were as dark and doubtful as I saw it, what right had I to cast away his life as I was doing? Mine own might be little worth, either to save or to cast away. But his!—his was my single treasure. Could I sacrifice that for a cause which, after all, might be a folly and a delusion?

The daylight began to creep cold into the room, and then I could be still no longer. I rose and drew back the window-curtain. The stars had all paled, save one that was exceeding glorious, the same that was visible in broad daylight, and that was thought by many to be an augury of our final victory. I could see but a strip of sky from my window, but in that strip there was a small bright cloud, rose-tinted by the dawn; it was changing from rose to gold while I looked at it. Its beauty—so far away and high—smote me with a kind of pain; that its Maker and our Father should take thought to set so fair an ensign in the sky, all blazoned with light and lovely colour but take no thought

for us that fought beneath it, and were come nigh to perishing.

Standing fatigued me, for I was still weak from my swoon, and I sank upon my knees beside the window. In the action I threw down with mine elbow a little book that lay upon the sill. I picked it up, and found it was my Bible. At the sight of it a thought came into my head that was foolish even to wickedness. Long ago, when Wamphray and I were girl and boy, we had been wont to find ourselves omens and directions by means of the *sortes Virgilianæ*. Why should I not, I thought, open this book at random and see what message, for comfort or correction, should reach me from its pages? None could better know than I how futile was such a method of inquiry, yet I could not resist making the trial.

But who can set bounds to the power of Him who commanded the light to shine out of darkness? It pleased Him now to make the folly of a foolish woman all as potent for her illumination as any wisdom; for the verse I lit upon was much the same to me as if an almighty voice had said, 'Let there be light.'

'*For what is your life?*' I read. '*It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away.*' And above me in the sky the little cloud swam golden in the field of blue.

'Twas a vapour, too, and more transitory still than human life; yet even so slight a thing hath its appointed task. Could Omnipotence by means of that task transmute the floating mist from that which merely shone by light reflected, into that which burnt with its own fire and shone with its own glory like the star beside it, were it not worth the most searching stress of tempest? If Omnipotence, out of us shadows, would fashion that which hath life in itself, and takes hold upon eternity by virtue of kindred thereto, should we murmur at His methods? Or should we shrink, even if these should pierce to the dividing of soul from spirit, and of joint from marrow?

It was 'Peace, be still!' to my heart, for I saw in that moment how it is the power to lose our life for the sake of that which we worship that doth save it, that doth transmute the shadow into substance. Whether for the right to receive truth open-minded, like ourselves; or in loyal defence of a great office, like the enemy; what did it matter, so it were verily the prime truth of the world to each soul, for which it stood ready to endure to the uttermost?

'O, sanctâ simplicitas!' I said to myself, with a better comprehension than ever before—'O, sanctâ simplicitas!' To us the martyrdom

by fire, if God so willed it; to them, our enemies and our brethren, the peasant's sacrifice of the necessaries of life to compass our death. So it were to each the one prime duty his light showed him, was it not in the power of God to turn it to salvation in this case as in that, in that case as in this?

A peace so buoyant took hold upon me that hunger and weakness were chased clean out of my remembrance. 'Twas not enough to have the weight lifted from my heart that had pressed me down to the earth; 'twas not enough to be assured of the presence of the Master in the storm. Like Peter in his desire to be bid to go to the Lord upon the water, so a passionate wish took hold upon me to make myself of use in this contest. If the word of command to my soul were 'Peace, be still!' that to my mind was 'Peace, be up and doing!'

In the early clearness and hush of the morning a plan started complete into my mind that seemed, could I but carry it out, to offer some small chance of help. 'Twas born the one moment and full-grown the next, so that I think I would have acted on it the minute after that had I had the necessary things beside me. But presently there came to mine ears the noise of voices and footsteps in the streets, the steps and voices of them that were

on their way to fetch the daily supply of water from Columbkille's Well; it was become a service of more danger than ever now that the Irish lines were drawn so near. One joined them from our house, opening and shutting the door with all the caution and quietness imaginable. Looking out of my window, I saw it was a little maid dressed in a countrywoman's suit. The dress fitted my scheme to a marvel; 'twas the very thing I needed. 'She shall lend it to me,' I determined. But the time for putting it in practice was over for that morning.

It was strange and sweet to see Margery's face of surprise when she came creeping softly into my room (on purpose to avoid disturbing me should I be still asleep) and found Roland and me at one of our little old games. She had, sure, been tenfold more astonished had she known the tempest that had wrought its will on me in the hours of darkness. But as, when the shadows flee away at the daybreaking, the birds awake and sing, so it was with me; and the baby-prattle and laughter of my child were not too trivial to be speech for my thankfulness.

CHAPTER XL.

RELATES THE BEGINNING OF A DANGEROUS EXPEDITION.

It was necessary for me to take someone into my confidence. I asked myself whom it should be, Rosa or Margery? After some thought, I chose Margery, partly to assure her of my forgiveness, and partly because I desired to spare my sister as much anxiety as I could. Now that mine eyes began to be opened, I saw how wasted and how weak she was, and small as the benefit might be to keep from her on one day that which must inevitably come to her knowledge on the next, I judged it worth the bestowing.

I knew beforehand that I should have a thousand objections to parry, some of which, to tell the truth, I scarce saw how to answer with any hope of convincing my listener. But some unwonted power of persuasion or of authority must have dwelt upon me that day,

for I succeeded beyond my utmost expectations in winning her to promise, first of all, not to oppose nor betray my scheme; and afterwards, to assist me by all means in her power.

'Twas a very tower of strength to me to have a scheme planned out that promised the smallest possibility of help, and, truly, I had need that day of everything that could put me in heart, or give me any confidence. For the state of our store-room was enough to give anyone a foretaste of despair. Margery did well to avoid details when she desired to comfort me. 'Twas true that something was saved from the spoilers, but it was so little that the face of starvation seemed scarce averted thereby for any measurable time. With great frugality, what we still possessed might last us a week; at the end of that time, if relief were still delayed, we must starve with our neighbours. Yesterday so blank a prospect had overwhelmed me with despair, but to-day I had a secret hope that bore me up.

There was many a thing to think of, many a preparation to make; and the day passed even far too quickly. And never, methought, were the faces of my dear ones half so dear as when I bade them good-night, not knowing if I should ever look upon them again. My pillow seemed to mock me when I saw it. To what

purpose should I lay my head on it, when sleep was as little likely to visit me there as the goddess with her horn of plenty? But that no ascetic folly might deprive me of the smallest fraction of my vigour (which I knew must be taxed to its utmost limit), I did dutifully make the attempt, and was rewarded by some hours of the most refreshing slumber. But I was broad awake when, in the gray dusk that as yet could scarce be told for dawn, Margery brought me the dress I had determined to wear. How much I could have delighted, I thought to myself as she was dressing me in it, in disguising myself thus a few short weeks before! Even then I thought with some amusement of Rosa's face, if by any chance she should see me, and of Roland's, if he should wake when I was stooping over his cot to leave my farewell kiss upon his brow. He did not. I could not choose but wonder; for truly I thought I left a little piece of my heart with him as well. It was to tear myself away, indeed, that I had to do. A kind of blindness fell upon me as I rejoined Margery at the staircase foot.

'Remember,' I said to her, 'if I return no more, 'tis in your charge I leave him.'

'Ah, madam,' said she, 'think better of it whilst there's time, and give up the adventure.'

'That were to show great love for him, truly,'

said I. 'Ask rather what is like to become of him, and of all of us, if I fail in it!'

'Why, Kirke is close to us,' said she. 'Any day may see him attempt the relief of the place.'

'Speak no more of it,' said I. ''Tis a week and a day since his messenger came to us, and not a finger hath he stirred to help us, for all his promises. He is surely ignorant of the straits we are come to. Well, 'tis time that someone took him an account of them.'

We opened the door as quietly as Cicely had done on the previous morning; then, each with a water-pail in her hand, we left the house and made the best of our way towards the gate at the end of the street.

Scarce a creature of the water-carriers was there before us, but plenty of them were on their way, and in a few minutes there was a considerable party collected at the gate. Then the sally-port was set open for us; we passed out one by one, and presently came to Columbkille's Well, where I drew my bucketful like the rest; but my pail, when I had filled it, I gave to Margery with her own.

The others left the well as soon as they were served. 'Twas a wonder, in fact, that the noise of the windlass brought not a random shot or two (for 'twas still too dark to distinguish figures

at a few paces' distance) to quicken their movements. But I lingered, with a pressure of the hand and a whispered word to Margery, and in a moment more was left alone.

There was a faint sound of stealthy footsteps, and voices that scarce dared even to whisper; I knew it meant another party upon the same errand as that of those I had come with; but I waited not their approach. I quitted the well like the rest, but in the contrary direction. At our rampart I was stopped, as I had foreseen and provided for; and upon the production of a pass I had procured from Adam Murray (and which I left in the hands of the sentry that questioned me) I was permitted to go on, with God speed, upon mine errand, whatever that might be. Once past our own lines, I took my way in the direction of the windmill, and up the hill.

Now that I review it in peace and quietness, I can see that my plan was in the nature of a forlorn hope—a suggestion of something not far removed from despair. But at the time I had an inner assurance of success—sure, I know not why, when so many fitter than I for the task had tried it and failed—that made it seem feasible if not simple. The others had made the attempt to pass through the enemy's lines at the riverside, which was their weakest

point, and consequently was vigilantly guarded. I meant to endeavour to make my way as far within their lines as I could, at the very busiest and central point, where such an attempt seemed so little likely and so purposeless that they might possibly be more negligent. And favoured by the morning dusk and the hedges and ditches, that served the enemy so well as covert to their marksmen and ambuscaders, I thought I might perhaps contrive to go a considerable distance unnoticed. After that, and when the light grew broader, I meant to lie hid until I should spy some officer or other person of distinction, whose protection I might claim; pretending to be a little countrywoman that had strayed from the road on her way from the Culmore side to visit a sick parent at Carrigans. I thought I could so mimic the country speech and behaviour, and the trepidation of such a person in such a plight, and in the presence of her betters, as to pass myself off for the peasant I gave myself out for. Then I meant to beg for a pass to Carrigans and back to Culmore, and I made little doubt but I should receive it; for since the driving of the Protestants to the walls they were anxious to conciliate them, and to that end were now lavish of small favours—so at least we had heard in Derry. What I was mainly desirous

to do was to produce such an impression of simplicity and timorousness as should proclaim me unfit to be either messenger or spy, lest the pass I meant to ask should be burdened with a condition—to attempt no communication with the ships. Strange, that I should try to deceive them, on purpose to escape the necessity of lying, and that after telling a dozen lies! I intended to profess myself a country peasant, which I was not, on my way to visit a sick parent, of whom I had none. Sure, herein I was as deeply dipped in deceit as I well could be; and yet, had I given my promise, I should have held myself bound thereby.

It was still very dark as I left our rampart; not to lose the advantage of the darkness, I walked very swiftly up to near the top of the hill. Here it was lighter than below, and I was beginning to be in pain lest I should be spied (for now I judged myself to be nearing the enemy's outworks), when I all but stumbled into a deep trench that ran at right angles to our line of defence, and likewise, I supposed, to their line of attack. A little marvelling both at its depth and its direction (which, taken together, should have told me its purpose as plain as a label), I nevertheless lost no time in clambering down into it; and scarce a minute after heard the

measured steps of a sentry pacing to and fro near its edge. A minute earlier, and he had seen me; a minute later, and, screened by the lingering dusk and by the depth of the trench, I passed him unsuspected. So signal a piece of good fortune at the very outset of mine enterprise seemed a sure earnest of success therein, and sent my spirits up so high that doubtless I had become foolhardy, but for a sound of voices that next minute came to mine ears, and brought back both my tremors and my caution. But I passed the speakers as I had the sentry, holding my breath the while.

After that I followed my friendly ditch or trench (for it appeared to be a mixture of the two, running at the side of a hedge, but too deep and wide to be merely the common accompaniment of that) to where it presently came to an end. This it did abruptly, at a gap in the said hedge; I was about to pass through the gap, as several signs gave indication was the habit of those that used the trench as their pathway, when I was aware of approaching footsteps on the other side of the hedge. Scarce knowing what I did or why I did it, I walked forward upon mine own side of it as if to meet them; when we were almost abreast of each other, I dropped swiftly and silently down upon the ground, crouching as close to

the hedge as I could. They came through the gap into the field where I was, and at that I promise you my heart beat loud enough to deafen me to all besides. But they turned into the trench without looking behind them, one after another, eight in all. 'Twas the third time I had escaped detection; and now I knew the meaning and object of the trench. It was neither more nor less than the entrance to a mine they were driving, somewhat prolonged within their own lines, no doubt because a ditch existed there before, and lent itself to conceal the miners. It had lent itself besides to the concealment of someone else on this occasion, and she owed them some thanks for having preserved a shelter so friendly.

The drumming of my heart had all but quieted to its common pitch, when a voice in the lane at the other side of the hedge set it going again as hard as ever.

'Well, now, Clancarty,' it said, 'ye won't fail us? The mine's to be finished to-night by ten of the clock. You'll be ready to make the assault at the same moment.'

'That I will, as sure as you say it,' returned a boyish voice, 'or may the devil fly away with me and my men!'

The speaker was so near me that by putting my hand through the hedge I could have

touched him; the voices of both were clear, not loud, but not mistrustful neither, nor cautious. It was plain that I was well within the enemy's lines, for they walked and talked like men that were upon their own ground.

'Is it not written in the Book of the Prophecies of—— Faith, I've forgotten the name of the prophet,' continued the second speaker—'that a Clancarty's to knock at the gates of Derry? I'll be he, by all the signs.'

At that he laughed.

'You've tried it once already,' said the other, 'and made but little of it.'

''Twas someone else that made at it,' said he that was called Clancarty, 'and what he made was not little, but great—a great discomfortable bump upon a skull that was none of his, but mine. But this time we shall have other luck, or I'll know the reason why.'

The other said a word or two that I did not catch; then, as the former party had done, they came through the gap in the hedge, and I could hear Clancarty's answer plainly.

'I go to reconnoitre at present,' said he, 'as you to see after your mining. Good luck go with you!'

'We might walk back in company,' said the other, 'if it's agreeable to you.'

'Agreeable, certainly!' rejoined the lad, 'if

twere possible; but that's just what it's not, I regret to say. I'm ordered to parade my men before the Marshal—bad luck to him for an old pedant!—and must strike across the bog as soon as I've made my observations, to get at them in time.'

'Across the bog? nonsense!' said the other speaker. 'You'll have all the marksmen in Derry trying to pick you off.'

'I can keep out of range, I suppose,' said the other, with his merry laugh. 'But, Lord! O'Neill, if these folks in Derry did but know their opportunity! they'll never have such another. There won't be a man left of ours on the east side of Ballougry Hill in a couple of hours; so much for Von Rosen's parade.'

'They won't know it, you see,' said O'Neill; 'and if they did, they'd have to pass our trenches to get any good of their knowledge, for aught I can see.'

Here was a piece of information worth the listening for, and it came at the punctual moment to be of service; for I was turning it back and forth in my mind whether to accost these two gentlemen in my pretended character of peasant, or to wait another chance. A fairer I could not wish for; but then I thought myself still far too near our own lines to escape suspicion. Now I knew that, if these gentlemen

were to be trusted (and their intelligence seemed of the most precise), I had but to lie hid until the hour of the muster, and might then go whither I pleased on the eastern side of Ballougry Hill, without any pass at all.

It seemed a piece of incredible carelessness that such an approach to the city should be left unguarded; yet what I had overheard had the unmistakable ring of truth. To be sure, they had no reason to apprehend any attempt to relieve the city from that quarter; and us they thought so safely mewed up within our fortress (which was also our prison), that they might leave us out of the account. Verily, 'tis to us spies—for since this enterprise of mine I have counted myself of that guild and fraternity—that generals should come, to be warned of these little negligences and omissions that do hinder their campaigns of success, and themselves of glory!

But 'twould never do to linger where I was until the return squadron of miners came up and took me prisoner; and the light was brightening every moment. I walked forward in the friendly shelter of the hedge (but keeping in the field, not in the lane) as quickly as I could, without looking like a fugitive. Here and there I had cross-fences to pass; the fact that there never lacked a space between these and the

great hedge—ay, and that a space well trodden into a footpath—brought my heart into my throat at every one of them, lest I should meet some reconnoitring party upon its rounds. Here and there, too, there was an open space in the great hedge itself; these also I passed in fear and trembling, after peeping and spying awhile to make sure there was none in the lane to see me. But never, sure, were these hedges half so serviceable to them that planted them or to them that spared them, as they were that morning to the trembling creature that crept past them, growing more fearful with every footstep that passed in the lane—there were not many—and shrinking closer to their screen with every pulse of the brightening light.

CHAPTER XLI.

A FRIEND IN NEED.

PRESENTLY both lane and hedges came to an end at the entrance to a farmyard; and here I drew back behind one of them, to consider what now were the best course for me to pursue. It needed not even a woman's poor knowledge of warfare to tell me that such a place as this was certain to be occupied by the enemy. The question I would fain have had some answer to, before going any nearer, was whether the owners were there with them under protection, or had gone away. And for a little while nothing happened to help me to solve the riddle.

One thing counselled caution, and that (if the paradox be allowed me) with a voice loud in proportion to its silence; 'twas the lack of the farm-dog's barking. He had been an added danger to me had he been there, as calling notice to my stranger-hood; but I

feared his absence meant a worse. I found myself wondering, in a vague and pointless fashion, if he were eaten, as most of ours in Derry were ere this; then I smiled at the folly of the thought; for, sure, in the country they were pushed to no such straits. But all the same, I lay concealed beside the hedge, and waited some further indication for my guidance. And as I waited, the sun came up, flooding the whole world with the heavenliest blue radiance; methought I had never seen him rise since I saw him last in the country. The dewy freshness and fragrance—how pungent-sweet it was, and yet how bitter; sweet to the nostril, bitter to the thought, as adding form and clearness to the image of all we had renounced for a duty we might never accomplish, a gain we stood yet in danger of being baulked of!

As I waited, methought I heard a door open, and thereafter came to mine ears the sound of voices; one, a man's, was low and muffled, as of one that desired to escape notice; the other, a woman's, was clear and sharp, and perhaps a thought louder than was needful, as of one that courted it. It seemed as though the speakers were approaching me, for very soon I could hear something of what was said.

'And someone's sure to come while you're absent from your post,' I made out, in the

woman's voice. 'Then you know what you'll get.'

By the sound of the man's voice, he seemed to be imploring caution; and he gave an example of what he desired, for not a word of what he said could I distinguish. The woman, instead of complying with his humour, spoke rather higher and clearer than before.

'Ah, then, come if ye like,' said she, 'though it's no use in the world you'll be of. But don't blame me if you get into trouble after it.'

At that the other voice seemed, muffled as it was, to reply in a tone of irritation. The woman's rang out in a laugh as she replied:

'And that's a neat compliment, sure,' said she. 'I'll keep it in mind, Mr. Sergeant, the next time you come into my kitchen, with your flattery and cupboard-love.'

With that a young and pretty woman ran from the farmyard into the lane and stopped at the gate of the very field where I was hidden, with a muttered malediction that I supposed was levelled at her military admirer. But he did not follow her. She did not open the gate, but leant upon it, shading her eyes with her hands from the dewy sunlight which seemed to send tiny rainbows dazzling into one's eyes from every twig of the hedge-tops, and scanned the country in all directions. How I escaped

her notice I know not; sure, the light itself must have been my veil.

Here, I thought, was my opportunity, could I but muster up the courage to grasp it. A woman—and a young and frank-looking woman to boot—could there be happier chance? I thought not, and determined to accost her.

But, as if the one half of me was in league with the enemy against the other, and had its charge to hinder me in every way, I presently found me almost powerless with mere timorous shrinking. I, that had ever despised your trembling, fluttering creatures, now found mine ears deafened and my voice choked, so that I scarce could do mine own will. 'Twas less, I think, the thought of danger than the knowledge that this was the turning-point of mine enterprise. If I failed to gain this girl, my plan was already frustrate and hopeless. If, on the other hand, I should have the good hap to obtain her assistance, I had as little doubt but I should bring it to a successful issue.

She leant upon the gate a dozen yards from me, or scarce so much. A whisper would have reached her ears, but I was powerless to utter that whisper. But since I must seize this chance at once, or else forego it altogether, I rose from my crouching posture, came for-

ward from the shadow I had hid in, and stood beside her, silent, or ever she was aware.

At first I thought she took me for a spectre, for she gazed upon me with a startled hush; the sunlight in her eyes gave them a look of being dazed and bewildered.

'Lord be good to us, Peggy!' said she the next moment; 'what have you done to yourself?' Then, seeing that I was not Peggy: 'Or who are you at all, at all?' she asked me.

'Twas her honest face, I think, that made me decide to trust her wholly. I laid my hand upon her arm.

'Would you help a mother in sore distress?' I asked her.

She looked at me with a keen inquiry in those eyes that a minute before had been so dazzled.

'Surely,' said she, 'so it can be done innocently.'

'Yourself shall judge,' I answered, 'if you will bring me where we can speak together without fear of interruption or of listening ears.'

'That last,' said she, 'is none so easy.' She knit her brows, seeming to meditate for a moment. Then she looked at me with an odd kind of laugh. 'Can ye milk?' she asked me.

I told her that I could.

'Our dairy-woman,' said she, 'is nowhere to be seen this morning, and 'tis long past the time

when the cows should be milked. If you will play the milkmaid, and help me with them, you'll do me a favour, and if I can return it I'll be pleased and glad.'

Her speech and manner were above what her appearance betokened, and presently she showed a quick and kindly eye as well, for as I came into the lane beside her, she took note of my faltering gait; 'twas nothing but strung feeling that caused my knees to shake, and I could have beaten myself for it. She set it down to weariness.

'You are tired,' said she. 'No doubt you've wandered out of your way, and have come a long journey. Sit down where you were under the hedge. I can bring them in by myself well enough, now that there's so few of them, and you'll help me to drive them into the yard when I get them here.'

But now that I had found a friend I could not bear to lose sight of her, lest I might fall in with someone whose questions might be worse to parry. So, though my limbs cried out to me to profit by her advice, my will said nay, and I kept beside her, and was glad of it, too, for a minute or two later an officer on horseback padded past us, doubtless on his way to the front. Whether he had marked me for a stranger had I been alone, I know not; what

is certain is that, seeing me in this girl's company, he passed me without so much as a glance of suspicion.

Dear! the fragrance of that country milking! Shall I ever forget it? It was almost too penetrating after the stench and faintness of the air of the town, and gave me a pleasure that was akin to sickness. The fresh milk, as it bubbled and frothed in the pail, set me all on edge with longing to taste it, with loathing of the thought of the hateful things the folk in the town were glad to eat. I fell a-longing for Rosa and the children. Were they but with me, I thought, to drink of the warm fresh milk, and breathe the fresh sweet air, how speedily would the wasted limbs and faces round themselves out again! How soon would health and vigour return to the languid frames! Were they but with me, what need to retrace our steps into the famine-struck, plague-smitten town? Might we not find us some small and sheltered corner where we could live concealed until the war was over and past? Had we not done enough and suffered enough, and was it not for others now to take up the burden that our shoulders were grown too weary to bear any longer?

'Twas a passing weakness, that angered me at myself for one minute, and the next I could have laughed at it. I bought me a porringerful

of the warm new milk, and drank it slowly while I sat at the work of drawing more; and I promise you that these fantasies survived not the first mouthful. For was I not doing my best for those I would fain have helped to their fill of it, and could not?

The milking being over, the selling of the milk came next; for by that time the farmyard was full of men that waited for it, each with his money in his hand. My pretty countrywoman, I thought, was in the fair way to make her fortune, should the war continue. I marvelled not a little at the civil behaviour of the soldiers, until I understood that they were for the most part the servants of officers, who bought the milk for their masters. When she was rid of the last drop of her merchandise, my friend signed to me to follow her into the house, which I did with the most submissive mien I could attain to. She was in possession of the most of my story before we had finished driving in the cows; now she asked me but one or two questions, and that in a way that showed she meant to help me.

She brought me into her kitchen, which was rather empty and bare for the living-room of so prosperous a place.

'I'd ask you,' said she, 'to sit down here and rest you, but I doubt 'twould scarce be safe;

there are so many of all sorts coming and going this morning. It might raise a question you'd find it none so easy to reply to. You'd be safer to be doing something, if anyone should take it into his head to look in. Maybe you'd make believe to be cleaning up while I'm away ?'

'Nay,' said I, 'but why should I make believe ? I'd be glad to do anything to serve you, after your kindness to me ; and I know country service well enough.'

'I'll be sworn you do !' said she, with a look that was as keen as the edge of an Irish skean. 'With hands like that, now, who could doubt it ?'

But I, too, could use mine eyes to some purpose. I took one of her own hands, and held it alongside of mine without a word ; then I looked her in the eyes, and she laughed again.

'It's "least said, soonest mended" with the pair of us, perhaps,' said she ; 'and there are other ways of hiding than skulking behind a hedge, as maybe you'll have reason to know before you get back to—where you came from. I ask no more confidences than I'm mistress of, at present ; but, mark you, your good star's high in heaven this morning ; for we have a very great man to our guest, and I have a passable reason for desiring speech of him. I mean to

ask him for a pass to Carrigans and back for you, as some return for the loss of my milkmaid, that I fear hath been wiled away by some of these fine followers of his.'

'Shall I need it, do you think?' said I. 'For in an hour or little more the river-bank will be as bare of men as the river-bed. They'll all be off parading before the Marshal at Brookhall.'

'Supposing they are,' said she, 'will they be there all day? You'll be safer with it than without it, anyhow; and give me leave to tell you there's no sense in refusing any help that may lift a lame dog over a style.'

Even while we were talking, the house was full of the noise of coming and going, and of the clanking of weapons. So was the yard without; and the door was opened once, but closed again as speedily. When she left me, I waited not a moment, but fell to work 'making believe' with so good a will that presently my hands were of the most unimpeachable griminess.

That this was my safety I had soon good reason to know; for the door was opened in very deed, and an Irish dragoon came into the kitchen.

'Good luck to ye, Peggy, jewel of the world that you are!' said he. 'Hast nivver a word for me this morning, nor a glance out of your sparklin' eyes at all my bravery? Musha!

isn't it a couple of sweet kisses you'll be afther givin' me for comin' to show you meself in all me glory ?'

And he came towards me with his arms outstretched, as though to embrace me. The heart in my breast seemed to stop beating, as I hovered on the very brink of detection. But I kept mine eyes upon my broom, and my shoulder towards the ruffian soldier.

A comrade checked him from the doorway.

'Is it crazy you are ?' whispered he, in an ecstasy. 'Here's the Colonel coming down the stair.'

The other turned upon his heel with an oath.

'It's as curst as a young fox she is, anyhow,' said he, 'after the scolding her mistress hath given her for being late. It's to bite a man she'd do, rather than to rewar-rd him as he deserves, this morning. What ! not a word yet ? Begorra ! you'll have found your tongue——'

But at that the comrade caught him by the shoulder and drew him away, and the next moment my new-found friend took his place, with a face made up of terror and inquiry. I tried to bring a smile to my lips to reassure her ; but they would continue their trembling, in spite of me.

'He suspects nothing,' I made a shift to

pronounce. 'He thinks I am Peggy in a fit of the sulks with him.'

'God be thanked for all His mercies!' said she, sitting down on a chair. 'I thought we were both lost.'

We looked at each other for a moment, part in lingering fright and part in thankfulness; and then, with one consent, burst out laughing, as though my escape and hers were the merriest of jests.

'Here's your pass,' said she, giving me a paper. 'In half an hour you may begone. They are all mustering in the yard this moment, if you care to go to the window and see them.'

'I thank you,' I said. 'I think I'm as safe out of view.'

'By the way,' said she, 'you'd best be made aware of the name you bear, for fear of accidents. Not knowing your own, I made bold to christen you by one belonging to a friend of mine that hath a house at Carrigans. 'Twas a piece of your luck that the Colonel was in such a hurry to get to horse, or else perhaps I might have had to produce you to his inquiry, not knowing what you were to call yourself.'

Judge if I thought so, too, when opening the paper I read this:

'To all Christian persons to whom these

shall come. This is to certify that Mercy Rose of Carrigans hath leave from me to pass to that place and return to her friends at Ballymagrorty.

'PATRICK SARSFIELD.'

'You know him?' said my friend, looking at my face.

'Well,' said I; 'had I gone to the window a minute ago, when you asked me, I wonder what had become of the pair of us.'

'He had never turned his head to look at you,' said she. 'Your good star's high, as I told you, and it's not the part of a friend to keep you back till it begins to decline, or else I wouldn't let you set a foot across the doorsill till you were rested and refreshed.'

But as it was, we gave them half an hour to be gone out of my way; and then, armed with this pass, which was enough to protect me, I thought, should I fall in with any stragglers or laggards on their way to the great parade, I set forth upon my walk to Carrigans.

What I said to her that had so greatly befriended me I scarce knew then, and know not now; but it was something that had some of the heat of my gratitude in it, for she put her arm about my shoulders and kissed me on the cheek.

'The day may come—who knows?' said she—

'when you may be able to do as much for me.'

It may; but until now it hath not. Nor have I since that morning either seen the face of mine unknown friend, or discovered who she was.

CHAPTER XLII.

HOW MRS. HAMILTON FELL IN WITH ONE FRIEND AND TWO FOES.

I MIGHT now, armed with my pass, have pursued my way along the highroad; but I judged it wiser, as well as pleasanter, to bear to the left along the river-bank. But all ways have their own dangers round a town that is besieged, and though I easily contrived to skirt the camp itself, I was once or twice upon the very brink of falling into an encampment of the wild Irish followers, which had been a worse difficulty to get out of. But after a time I left these too behind, and then began to conceit myself that my enterprise was as good as accomplished now that the obstacles thereto were all surmounted and left behind.

Alas! the one obstacle I had never taken thought of now began to threaten me most shrewdly with failure, and that was mine own miserable weakness. What was the walk to

Carrigans to a strong young woman like me? Nothing. A trifle — a morning's diversion. And now that it was, as one might say, almost within my view, I began to find my limbs faltering beneath me, and my strength so thoroughly gone that 'twas out of my power to go a step further until I had rested again.

Perhaps it was the sight of mine own dear home that drew all the last of my strength into eyesight and memory; for it was just over against me, with its topmost turrets and windows full in view above the belt of trees, when I broke down altogether. I sat me down upon the ground where I was, and fell to longing for the wings of a dove, that I might fly to it and find me a messenger there instead of at Carrigans, and so be free to return to the city.

The sun was hot and high, and beat upon my head in the open field, and then I bethought me of a little thicket over against the Cloncally brook (in the mouth of which I had used to keep mine own little boat in happier times). It was but a few steps distant. I rose, and, dragging my wearied limbs toward it, presently gained its shade.

When persons of mine acquaintance have related in my hearing the story of enterprises of their own that they have brought to a happy

issue, it hath often moved my wonder to mark how they have held to their first plan in spite of all difficulties, bending adverse influences to their aid by mere force of will. With me it hath commonly been the exact contrary, and 'tis oftener by bending to circumstances than by subduing them that I have gained mine end at last. On this day, everything in the world seemed in league to befriend and further me; and here, at the moment of my greatest discouragement, occurred the strangest instance of this their complaisance.

For, having gained the little thicket, I was on the point of casting me down to rest in its covert, when there came to mine ears the whispering plash of the river against its shore, clear in the morning stillness. Sure, there is never another sound in the world so sweet, unless it be the music of the mounting lark, that is the melody most proper to its burden. Its invitation tempted me and strengthened me to take the few last steep steps that lay between me and its brink. Having accomplished them, I saw, there at my very feet, mine own little boat. I knew her at the first glance. Near her on the bank there was a man bending over some task that I took not the time to observe, for at the sound of my rustling footsteps he raised his head, and

looked me in the face; and whom should it be but Andrew Wilson, our old Scotch gardener!

My task was accomplished now, in good sooth, I thought; and I put out my hand to him without a word, having scarce the breath to utter one betwixt the surprise and the scramble. To mine amazement, he looked me in the face without a sign of recognition, as though I were a person he had never set eyes on till that moment.

'Well, lass,' said he; and, sure, there never was a sound more homely in any ears than his manner of speech to mine; 'and wha may you be that's sae couthie and genty and white in the face?'

'Andrew,' said I, finding my voice in a moment, 'is it possible you do not know me?'

He shaded his eyes with his hand, and an odd change passed over his countenance.

'Na, na,' said he. 'Sic a thing wadna be permitted. Dinna tell me you're my mistress!'

'Why not?' said I, 'when that is what I am; or was, at least, in former days.'

'Dead,' said Andrew—'dead, and sae young an' sae bonny! Dead o' fair want an' famine! An', oh, the puir toon o' Derry, when the gentry tholes sic a weird!'

At that, seeing what he took me for—to wit, my own spectre, and a messenger of evil—

I could not choose but laugh, and having begun, my laughter got the better of me, so that I could not leave it off, till at last I was fain to sit down upon the bank to indulge it, and to humour the trembling in my knees that would not pass away. He came nearer to me with a look of wonder, as one whose imaginings of how a ghost should comport itself were all astray. I put out my hand to him again.

'Andrew,' said I, ''tis I myself, and no spirit. 'Tis I myself in the flesh. But ghost or none, sure you'd never be afraid of me in the broad daylight.'

At that he came quickly to my side, and took my hand in his; he looked from that to my face and back again.

'My leddy,' said he—'my dear leddy! Eh, but you're sair wasted; ye maun hae had a sair time o't to gar ye look sae like a ghaist. I wunner if I'd ken Annot again, gin I were to see her.' The pity in his eyes changed to a kind of fear and hesitation. 'Maybe she'll no be leevin',' said he slowly.

'She is alive and well,' I told him, 'and not much altered—at least, to mine eyes, that see her often.'

'She maun be as teuch as a rizzard haddock, then,' said he, in a tone of indignation, whereat my lips took so ungovernable a fit of twitching

that I could not help breaking out again into undisguised laughter. He looked at me gravely the while, as one that marvelled at the folly of a creature so easily moved to mirth. 'Tis a position in which we have often found ourselves, both before and since. But I was grave enough, and graver than himself, before I had finished answering the questions that he presently began to ply me with.

'But now,' said I to him, having satisfied his inquiries—'now my task is at an end, and mine errand accomplished, for you will be my messenger to Colonel Kirke; you will tell him all I have told you. Make him understand the straits we are brought to; sure, when he knows them he'll delay no longer, but will come at once to our relief.'

'I fear that's oot o' my pooer,' said he, very slowly, as one that is forced to utter the thing he loathes.

'Don't say so!' I exclaimed. 'You're old—that's true; but the fate of the whole city—I say not of the kingdom, but it's no less—hangs, perhaps, upon that message.'

'It canna be borne by me,' said he more firmly; 'an' grieved I am to say it. It's no the age—there's mony a guid day's wark yet in An'ra'. But I gied ma promise, when I took protection, neither to act against King James

nor yet to assist his enemies ; to do your errant wad be baith o' them—an' mair's the pity.'

'It's the last thing I'd ask of you,' said I, 'to break your plighted word—even to do the greatest service in the world to your friends and to your country. God's strength aiding me, I'll even try to find my way to the fleet myself.'

I rose to my feet as I spoke ; but God, alas! had granted me no such renewed strength as I hoped ; and the action was enough to show me how futile were any such attempt on my part. Whoever should take to Kirke the tale of our extremity, I was convinced that it would never be Mary Hamilton.

Andrew saw the admission written on my face.

'You're no sae daft!' said he ; 'that I suld say sic a word to my mistress! You're ower sair forfoughten wi' the road you've come already, to pit fit to gr'und on sic a journey. Na, na! ye'll hae to seek anither messenger ; an' you'll hae to rest a wee before you do e'en sae muckle. Sit ye doon in your ain bonny boat—she's gey an' snod, considerin' a' thing—an' I'll tak' ye tentily ower the river to a bieldy bit I ken o', that's as safe frae rovin' fit as it is frae rovin' e'e.'

I could not gainsay him ; 'twas even but too evident that I must rest before I could go further afield to find me one that I knew would

be my messenger. As tenderly as though I were a child did Andrew place me in the boat, and it seemed but a minute after that he was helping me out in the little cove at the other side. After that he led me, by a marvellous intricate path he had contrived, up the steep bank, through the tangle of brushwood, and so into mine own pleasant wilderness, which now was such a maze of sallows as never eye of man beheld before in a garden.

Through that also did he lead me, and presently brought me, altogether bewildered, to the door of the little summer-house; it was as thick beset in front with sallows as it was behind, so that I did not marvel that he should say it was as safe from roving eye as from roving foot. But the house itself was as fairly kept as ever; and never, sure, did any wayfarer hail any resting-place with greater thankfulness than I the sight of it.

Being seated there—and never till that moment, I thought, had I known the worth of shade and coolness—the old man left me, disappearing among the sallows with extraordinary rapidity. Before long he returned, bringing in one hand a piece of fair white bread, the like of which I had not seen for months, and in the other a green leaf filled with the most beautiful red ripe strawberries that ever I saw in my life.

'Why, Andrew,' said I, 'are these the fruit of the Virginia strawberries that you preferred to the company of all your friends in Derry? Have they escaped prowling foot and thievish hand, and repaid your care of them?'

'I'se warrant them,' returned the old man, with a very comical look of self-satisfaction. 'Ye'll no see mony sic berries in Ireland, or I'm far oot in my reckonin'! Eat them up, ma leddy; there's plenty mair whaur thae cam' frae; thanks to the sauch busses, that naebody thinks o'-warslin' his way through. Ay, there's a wheen *twa-footed craws* hereaway wad hae made short wark o' them, had they had but the least inklin' o' what was sae weel hidden ower the slope o' the hill. Eat them up!' he continued to exhort me, as I hesitated to touch the tempting morsels. 'I tell ye there's routh o' them there-by for the gatherin'. Ay, and mair bread, to the bargain—though I daursay it's thievin' thae Papishers wad ca't, gin they saw me lift it, an' that though they'll never pay you plack or boddle either for the use o' your hoose or the destruction they've done til't.'

He disappeared again from my side; but returned almost immediately with a truss of dry hay, which he began to spread out upon the floor.

'Rest ye there,' said he, when he had gotten

it placed to his mind. 'If ye get a sleep, 'twill be a' that the better. And in the meantime I'll——'

He hesitated, and then stopped, looking at me from under his brows the while with the strangest balancing expression that ever I saw on a human visage.

'Ay,' said he, 'I dinna ken; maybe it's a kind o' leein'. But the laddie's no far awa'—I could fetch him to your leddyship braw an' quickly—and blithe, blithe he'd be to do your errant—I ken that. But deil tak' me gin I hae ony clearness—I canna tell whether it be lawful or no (me bein' held back by ma promise gien to hae nae dealin's wi' the tae side nor the tither) to bring him to speech o' you!'

The solid ground seemed to turn with me, as I gathered his meaning from his broken words. There was, then, someone close at hand, ready and willing to be my messenger, if he but knew of my need; and yet by the old man's scruples I was like to be baulked of him.

'Indeed, Andrew,' said I coldly (for though I could not but respect his reverence for his word, the same was like to cost me dear—and his vacillation moved mine anger), 'I have little skill in the resolving of questions in casuistry; you must even settle that matter with your own conscience! But when you think that by de-

taining me here—in safety, I grant you—but out of the way of friends as well as foes, you may be keeping me from meeting that same messenger, and thus be serving the enemy——'

I ceased, for I saw that I had hit on a consideration that had weight with him.

'Dod! I'll risk it,' quoth he; and therewith he left me.

The couch he had prepared me was as tempting as though it had been composed of down to one so weary as I. I laid me down upon it, with no purpose to sleep, and even with a little feeling of amusement that the old man should have thought that possible, in the situation I was in. But all of the world that I could see breathed peace and rest. The sigh of the summer breeze among the willow saplings, the gently-moving lights and shadows, the warmth and sweetness, soothed me like a lullaby. The hum of the bees around the open door was full of the very spirit of drowsiness; and before I knew that I felt their influence I must have yielded to it and fallen asleep.

The sun was westering when at last I awoke —or was awakened, rather—by the sound of a merry shout that was all as startling to me as the noise of a gunshot, for it was in a strange voice. I sat up, shaking in every limb.

'Ha, Patrique, mon ami, I am srough!' it

exclaimed in a tone of triumph. 'Anozer struggle ; it ees not far. Reach me ze hand—so !'

And by the sounds that accompanied the voice, I knew that two men or more were forcing their way through the thicket that Andrew had deemed so impassable.

To attempt to fly was hopeless, and 'twas equally so to expect that my shelter should pass unobserved. I rose from my couch of dry hay and seated myself upon the summer-house bench with as much composure as I could muster ; but, in truth, 'twas scarce enough to swear by, as the saying hath it. Beads of sweat started out upon my brow, and my knees knocked together as I sat.

'Zat old fox of Andrew,' said the voice that had spoken before—'nevare did he zink we should discover zis nest in ze wood.'

'It hath the look of a pleasure-house,' said another voice, 'and doubtless hath been so, before these troubles began.'

'And doubtless so eet ees still,' said the first speaker. 'Zere is no—how do you say ?—decay ?—désordre ?'

'No neglect, ye would say,' said the second speaker. 'No more there is. We'll even have a look at what he keeps inside ; not garden-tools, I'll lay you a gold Jacobus.'

They were at the very door by this time, and the closeness of the danger brought back some of my courage. I sat still where I was; but my lips and hands ceased to tremble. The next moment a tall, fair man appeared in the doorway, followed closely by one that was shorter and darker, and had a pair of singular bright black eyes in his face. He muttered a whole string of foreign oaths and exclamations. But the Englishman, as I judged him, turned towards him with a laugh.

'Beshrew me, but it's better than I looked for!' said he. 'We are come through the enchanted wood, and here we find the wood-nymph awaiting us.'

I rose from my seat with a bob-curtsey and a 'What's your will?' that, upon my word, were a credit to me, for they passed muster with these new-comers.

'What's our will, do you say?' said the Englishman. 'Upon my life, my pretty lass, 'tis to make your better acquaintance. I may speak for the pair of us, I believe, Pointee?' said he to his companion.

'Mais certainement!' quoth he. 'Eet ees too fair a chance for us to turn ze back upon eet.'

''Twill be my father you're in search of,' said I.

'Your father? And who may he be?' said the Englishman. 'Not that I care to know; for were he the best man that ever wore shoe-leather, his daughter's a fair substitute for him.'

With that he would have taken me by the hand; but I fetched him so shrewd a rap upon the knuckles that he drew back his with greater speed than he had held it forth. The Frenchman broke out laughing.

'She ees—how you say?—coy—ze nymph of ze sicket!' said he. 'Shall ve beg her to give us ze favour of her company at our lodging, Patrique? Eet is somewhat larger zan her own.'

''Tis an invitation that mere politeness requires of us,' said the other, with a mocking bow. 'Come along, my pretty witch, or dryad, or whatever you may be. In a word, you are our prisoner. No lingering; come at once.'

And with that he laid his hand on mine arm in good sooth, and led me out of the little summer-house.

But I, though glad to be in the open, was not minded to lose my liberty thus tamely.

'By your leave, gentlemen both,' said I, 'I'd be glad to know how you can pretend to take prisoner a harmless country wench that is travelling with a pass signed by one of your own generals.'

Upon my word, I did assume the very manner of a timid, whimpering country lass, plucking up a spirit in the presence of her betters, so that I could not but admire mine own mimicry; and the amusement I felt put me in heart to go on with the masque.

'A pass, have you?' said the Englishman. 'Let us see it.'

Forth I plucked my pass, and first I held it out towards him, and then I drew it back.

'You shall read it over my shoulder, sir, an it like you,' said I, with my bob-curtsey; 'but I beg you will not ask me to give it out of my hand, for, sure, I feel no safety without it.'

He glanced it over.

'Patrick Sarsfield!' said he. 'A fig for Patrick Sarsfield! What do you think his pass is worth? Are there no other colonels in the King's army save he? This gentleman'—and here he pointed to his friend—'hath a far higher command than Sarsfield's, being the Commander-in-Chief of the artillery—no less. He will give you a pass—so you will but crave it as you should—worth ten of this.'

'Nay, sir,' said I—but I promise you I began to quake again—'Colonel Sarsfield's, by your leave, is good enough for me, so you and this other honourable gentleman will but acknowledge it.'

'Rose,' he went on, taking no notice of what I had said—'Mercy Rose. Now, I dare swear I have some acquaintance with one named Rose at Carrigans. Is not your father a saddler?'

'Mine uncle, sir,' said I, quaking more than before; for now I began to fear I had got myself into the toils indeed. 'No, sir; truly, my father is but a labouring man, and nothing likely to be known of your honour.'

'Nay,' said he, 'but I dare be sworn I have met him somewhere, and, strike me dead! his daughter shall not lack mine entertainment. Go on, go on, to the house. Never did I meet your match for obstinacy. Go on.'

'If you will not be gainsaid, sir,' said I, 'even lead on; I will follow.'

But now it was the Frenchman's turn to break out laughing.

'Veel you so?' said he. 'I have hear such a tale before. I am not born yesterday. *I* veel lead; you shall follow me, and Patrique, he vill follow you to make sure zat you—how you say?—geev us no slip.'

Now I began to think all was lost indeed, and Master Pointis, as now I learn that his name should be written, began to bend the sallows to right and left of him, so to make a lane among them through which I might pass; for Andrew's devious path they had not noticed, nor, indeed,

could I myself see the entrance thereof, so cunningly did it wind in and out. But, turning my head in mere despair to make one last appeal to the other, I saw a little figure pass quickly out from behind the summer-house.

'Take hold, Patrique,' says Master Pointis.

And he did take hold of the saplings to right and left of me, so enclosing me, as it were, in a cage; for Mr. Pointis was just in front, bending away the next. Of a sudden the saplings the other had taken hold of sprang up around me, and he fell back with a kind of sobbing groan. I felt my hand grasped, and was pulled quickly back, and round to the side of the summer-house, before Master Pointis could make his way from the entanglement he stood in to see what detained his comrade—ay, and before I myself could rightly comprehend what had happened. When I did, I was standing between Andrew Wilson and Gorman O'Cahan, safe within the scarce visible entrance of the pathway whereby he had led me up to the summer-house at first. The Frenchman was gotten free from the sallows, and was bending over his friend, who seemed at first to give a few faint struggles, and then lay perfectly still.

'Hist!' whispered Gorman very low—for, indeed, there were not ten yards of distance between the Frenchman and ourselves, and it

was but the soft rustling of the summer breeze in the bushes that let him from hearing what the lad said as well as we—'hist! he's in a trap; I shall have him as well as the other.'

But at the thought of it, and at the sight of the skean that Gorman lifted as he said the words, a shuddering took me that was like to make me cry aloud.

'Nay, nay,' I whispered, 'no more killing; we are safe enough; let him be.'

Andrew turned without a word, and led the way down the steep bank towards the river. But before we had taken many steps, the thought of what I had seen—to wit, a strong, masterful man cut off in a moment in the pride of his strength and the midst of his masterful wickedness—proved more than I could bear; I could go no further. I sat me down where I was, betwixt the old man and the lad, and there fell to sobbing and crying as if my heart would break.

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOW MRS. HAMILTON RETURNED TO THE CITY.

In no long time my weeping, having free course, staunched itself, and then I quickly understood that Gorman O'Cahan was he that Andrew had brought to be my messenger. A better I could not wish, and, indeed, he had carried so many messages successfully already to my knowledge that I began to feel assured that this also was as good as done the moment he undertook it. There was little sign of his ensigncy as yet, either in his attire or in his manners. His clothes were what they had ever been, neither worse nor better; his smile was as wide and as Irish as ever. But when he began to tell me in his old way, at once shy and zealous, how ready he was to set out at once upon mine errand, in good sooth I deemed that Irish smile of his the pleasantest that ever I had seen in my life.

'An' what is it I'm to say to the General, lady dear?' quoth he.

At that I began and told him, point by point, all that I judged most likely to move Kirke to attempt our relief. I bade him recall to the mind of the Major-General how ill provided we had been at the very first, so that, in the judgment of those who came from England to our aid, it was vain to attempt any defence at all. I described to him how, at Kirke's first coming, finding ourselves in reasonable hope of speedy victory, we had permitted ourselves to be more liberal of our victual than perhaps was wise ; and then I went on to narrate how, when despair took hold upon us at the thought of this our folly, when we saw ourselves deserted by him, God had set bounds to the same by means of the very violence of the enemy ; their bombs breaking into and discovering to us stores that no one in the town knew aught about, and without which we had long ago succumbed. But I bade him tell the Major-General how, in the very moment of his turning his back upon us, when we came nearer to flat despair than at any other time, the mere suggestion that now was the time for us to make terms with the enemy had set the whole town ringing with shouts of 'No surrender!'

And after that (seeing by the eyes of my listener that not a word I said would be lost, but would be delivered in the ears of the Major-

General even as I spoke them) I went on to describe the daily-growing pinch of want. I related how, from the moment of the fleet's departure, plague and famine began to do their work and to reap their harvest. I told them how men, women, and children began to drop dead or dying in the very streets, slain not more by want of food than by the stench of the town and the pestilence it bred. And then, coming to the driving of the Protestants beneath the walls, I told them how, in the moment of their sorest suffering, their one prayer to us was that we should not lessen our chance of victory by mercy shown to them, or by taking them into the city.

The wonder in their eyes put me, as it were, at such a distance from that I spoke of (which was become an old story to me) that I could see it as they did.

'Ay,' said I, ''twas marvellous constancy, was it not?—a kind of miracle in self-devotion. But ours matched it, for we refrained from taking them in.'

Then I went on to speak of the terrible straits the poorer sort were now reduced to, so that there was nothing too loathsome and revolting to be eaten; a cat or a dog was long ago become a toothsome morsel, so that now there were none of them left, and even a rat or a

mouse had a price in money. I told them how we of the better sort, that had hitherto been able to provide ourselves with diet a little less nauseous, if scarce more plentiful, were fast being brought to the same case.

'But tell General Kirke,' said I, 'that no extremity will ever make us renounce the cause while we have strength to strike a blow for it or breath to raise a prayer for it. Tell him that whilst there's a single voice in Derry able to shout "No surrender!" that's our watchword. Ask him for pity or else for shame to make one real attempt to help us, one effort that will give us a single chance of life and victory.'

The lad, who had been listening with eyes and mouth as well as with his ears, threw himself upon his knees at my feet.

'If Kirke could hear yourself, me lady,' said he, 'sure, it's no man at all he'd be—sure, there's nivver a stone in the world as hard as his heart must be—if he'd refuse. Oh, lady darlint, whatever power's in me tongue, be assured I'll try it on that same General. I haven't been through it as you have, but, sure, it's a hear-rt in me breast I have, and God,' says he, 'may send me success.'

'Amen,' said I.

'And amen,' quoth Andrew, in a very feeling manner. 'That is,' said he, pulling himself up

sharply, 'if I may say sae innocently ; me haein' passed ma word no' to do naething to help ye.'

'Sure, there's no breach of your promise in praying for us,' said I.

'Wull ye warrant me o' that?' said he seriously. 'Is it no' written that the effectual fervent prayer o' a righteous man availeth much ?'

And now I had a difficulty of another sort to contend with, having to obtain permission of this, my servitor, to return to my friends. His first project (that I should inhabit the summer-house, and he, playing the raven to my Elijah, should bring me my food day by day) was proved impracticable by what had happened that afternoon; but now he became even tedious in the enumeration of the many safer hiding-places whereto he could conduct me. 'Twas to no purpose that I told him my will was set to return to the city; he met the announcement with the contrary one, 'Ye canna be sae daft!' And when I persisted in my determination, he met me with flat rebellion against my will.

'De'il a boat you'll get frae me,' said he, 'for a' she be your ain, to tak' ye ony sic gait.'

At that, fearing lest my plan should be frustrate, after all, through his obstinacy, I fell to pleading.

'Say no more, Andrew,' I begged him. 'Don't you know that my son is in the city?'

'He's in guid hands, I suppose?' said the old man severely.

'But, Andrew,' said I—and though I desired to use persuasion, I know not how it was that my voice sounded stern and harsh—'oh, Andrew, he is not well.'

He looked at me in a questioning manner for a moment; then turned upon his heel and began to put the boat in order to set me across the river.

Happily for me, it presently occurred to him that, now my business was finished and mine errand despatched, 'twas no contravention of his promise, but the reverse, to pack me back into the city, whither the enemy had driven in any men of ours that they had discovered outside of our lines. 'Twas a kind of making things even for his bringing me to speech of my messenger. After that he tried no more to set hindrances in my way, but, on the contrary, was so desirous to further my return that he was easily prevailed upon to let me have the boat altogether. In pursuance of the same idea, his conscience permitted him to make another expedition into the house—but this time more in the way of barter than of theft—in search of something for me to eat. He

returned with a small loaf of bread (of the same fair quality as that he had brought me in the morning), whereof I ate none, but wrapped it in a napkin, so that I could carry it. After that he gave me a little basket—but 'twas as much as I could carry—filled with strawberries, laid on fair green leaves, so as that they should not destroy each other's freshness. When I thought of the children's faces when they should see this feast, I promise you I thought myself well repaid for the trouble and danger I had undergone, even if nothing else should come of mine enterprise.

'Dod!' said Andrew, 'I dinna ken hoo ye are to mak' your way doon the river; in little mair than a mile ye'll be in the thick o' their sentries, and then what'll ye dae?'

'It's kinder,' I said, 'to keep you in ignorance of that; I may say, for your comfort, that I deem myself indifferent safe, but that's all I'll tell you.'

'I wadna wunner,' he returned, 'but you're safer there nor here, for they're in a terrible takin' there up-by aboot that Captain Patrick that hath come by his death the day. An' it's you they blame for't, the lass that came here to visit her feyther on her road to Carrigans.'

'See, then,' said I, 'I am better to get me gone at once.' And so put out into the river,

and let its current carry me down, with scarce a dip of the oars to help it. He stood upon the bank watching me as long as he could see me; and, in good sooth, for all he thought it a thing forbid to pray for us as combatants, there are few things I am more sure of than that he had leave of his conscience to desire my safety as an individual—ay, and to pray for it, too; for his eyes were as moist as a maid's when he gave my boat the push that sent her out into mid-stream.

And the river carried me on as softly as a dream; but, for all that, dreaming or soothing was the last thing I had in my mind; for though I spoke so confidently to Andrew, my adventure of the afternoon had a little shaken my belief in the efficacy of Sarsfield's pass; nor could I close mine eyes to the fact that I ran some risk. The sun was down, but the twilight lingers long in July. It was certain that, on the river, of all places, the enemy would be alert and vigilant. But for one thing, I had waited in some hidden nook till darkness should be quite fallen; but I had heard (as hath been set down) that an attack was planned against the city, to be made that night at ten of the clock, and I conceived it my duty to push on, if by any chance I might bring them news of it in time to be of use. But in the peaceful deepening of the twilight, strife

began to appear a thing so unnatural as to be scarce credible. The stillness round about me so wrought with me that the events of the day began to seem dream-like and fantastic, not to be acted upon. I sat up in my boat, keeping her in mid-channel with scarce an effort, and drawing full and easy breath in a kind of unreasoning hope that I should be able, after all, to attain mine end unmolested. A sudden shout broke my dream to shivers, and my hope as well.

'Boat ahoy!' cried someone from the bank. 'What boat is that?'

The river there is wide; I deemed it wide enough to give me a pretext for going on without heeding his shout, as though I had not heard it. He repeated it, and that in a tone there was no ignoring:

'What boat's that? Answer, or I fire!'

In truth, I had no mind to have every sentinel on the river-bank made to prick up his ears at the sound of a shot; therefore I delayed no longer to make mine answer.

'A friend, with a pass,' I cried, wondering if he would distinguish the words.

He did, and the rejoinder quickly followed:

'Approach, friend; show the pass, and give the countersign.'

It was with a quaking heart that I did as I

was bid; half minded, the while, to keep on my course and let him do his worst, since assuredly he could not overtake me. But the thought, how the bank of the river would bristle with enemies, should the sound of the shot he threatened once put them on the alert, determined me to obey him; and in I came.

He came down to the brink of the water to inspect the paper; but as he held it upside-down, it was plain he could not read it. Therefore I offered to read it to him, and save his eyes; laying the blame upon the failing light, so to keep his vanity upon my side.

'"This is to certify that Mercy Rose of Carrigans hath leave from me to pass to that place, and return to her friends at Ballymagrorty,"' I read. 'And 'tis signed by Patrick Sarsfield,' I added.

'Sarsfield, quotha?' said he. 'What right hath Colonel Sarsfield to give a pass for the river, I'd like to know? No one is allowed to go upon the river, my lass, save with a pass from Hamilton himself, countersigned by my Lord Louth, or by Sir Michael Creagh, or one of these generals that hath the keeping of it.'

I put mine apron up to mine eyes, and made as if I fell a-whimpering.

'And how was a poor maid to know that, I pray you?' said I. 'What am I to do, now

that it's fallen so late? Lack-a-day! I'm in a pitiful case.'

'You'll have to go back where you came from,' said he, 'and return by the road, as I suppose you went.'

'I did,' I said; 'but, ochone! ochone! the weary walk I'll have—in the middle of the night, too, and with so many abroad that would make no scruple about robbing a lone woman.' At that I thought my man pricked up his ears. 'And my mistress hath a terrible tongue, too,' I said, 'when one doth but linger a moment in the farmyard. However shall I face her if I make so long delay as this is like to be?'

Then I buried my face in mine apron, and pretended to cry bitterly.

'Come, come,' said he severely; and his voice had altogether changed, and now was harsh and loud, 'cease that folly. Robbed, say you. What's that you have which you fear to be robbed of?'

I looked at him as though I debated some matter in mine own mind.

'If, for any reasonable share of it, you'd let me keep the rest,' said I, 'and let me hold on my way down the river—— Sure, what can a single poor maid do to harm you?'

'Come! how much have you?' said he angrily. 'Let me see it.'

'I have seven shillings,' said I; and I made my voice tremble—sooth! there was little difficulty in that. 'You'll take half, and let me keep the rest?'

'I'll take five,' said he, 'and let you pass, so you can give the countersign.'

I had hoped he had forgotten that; but at the word I let the napkin with my money tied in it fall upon my lap, and held up my hands as one struck dumb. And, faith, I found little difficulty in feigning dismay, either.

'Look you there, now!' said I: 'with your questioning, you've driven it clean out of my head. And now you'll have to help me to recall it. Let me see; 'twas a name, wasn't it?'

I kept mine eye on my man's face as I spoke, and I saw that my first guess had hit the mark.

'What sort of name?' said he.

'Dear, dear!' said I. 'To think I should have let it slip out of my mind, now! 'Twas—I think 'twas the name of one of the captains—wasn't it, now?'

But this I put forth with a little hesitation, for I was venturing on ground that might prove hollow.

'Why,' says he, 'I warrant you he's a captain, and a fine young captain, too. Good luck go with him this night!'

'To be sure,' said I. ''Tis he that's to lead the assault on Derry this night—now, isn't it?'

'What!' says he—'what's that you say? Who told you that?'

'Aha!' said I. 'You see, I am one that hath friends in the camp. You'd better treat me with civility. My Lord Clancarty,' said I. 'There's your password.'

'Clancarty it is, sure enough,' quoth he. 'And since you know that, and have a pass in your hand, faith! I'll even let you pass, when you've handed over the money.'

'Take four shillings, then,' said I, 'and leave me three.'

'Why, so I will,' says he, 'if you'll throw a kiss into the bargain.'

'Nay, truly,' I said, 'I'd rather give you the five—but you'll never be so hard upon me!'

'Five shillings,' says he, 'or four and a kiss; it's my last word.'

'Take the five, then,' said I, and held them out to him.

He took them and put them into his pocket.

'And now,' quoth he, 'I shall have the kiss as well;' and therewith made a catch at the boat.

But I was too nimble for him, being by great good fortune in the very act of pushing off from the bank; and he, missing the edge of the boat by a hair's-breadth, went floundering into the

water, heels over head. And the last I saw of this would-be gallant, as I floated away from him, he was scrambling up the bank again in mighty disconsolate fashion, dripping from every stitch he wore. As to the five shillings he had come by in so dishonest a manner, I make little doubt he left them at the bottom of the river.

For mine own part, all went as well with me as heart could wish. Twice more I was stopped before the darkness increased so as to hide the boat; but each time the knowledge I had gained did me yeoman's service. As neither of the sentries was able to read, I even made bold to give Richard Hamilton's name, instead of Patrick Sarsfield's, and to append my Lord Louth's thereto. And that and the countersign got me past without trouble or question.

Night was fallen as dark as pitch by the time I reached the Ferry landing-stage. There I thought myself altogether safe, and so took time to moor my boat before I left her, for, truly, a boat was too precious a thing to us to be left in any jeopardy. And then I took my way along the lane most confidently. I marvel indeed that I broke not into a snatch of a song; weariness, I suppose, prevented me. And I here record my gratitude to that same friendly pain; for, as it was, I did all but betray

myself to a party of men that were drawn up in the Ferry lane. I was so close to them when I stopped that I could hear them whispering softly one to another.

'I'll be sworn I heard a footstep,' said one, in a very low voice. 'Will it be the Captain, do you think?'

'Hardly,' said his comrade, as cautiously. ''Tis but a short time since we heard the changing of the guard there above, at the gate; and that, thou knowest, was at half-past nine.'

So, then, I was still in time, could I but make my way past this ambuscade; and that I thought very possible. That morning's adventure had shown me that a hedge gives shelter at both sides, and now I put that piece of knowledge into practice. Very gingerly I retraced my steps until I found a gap—the hedge now was full of them, since some of the bushes had been pulled up in the early part of the siege for fuel, before the enemy catered for us in that article by means of their bombs. Through that I crept, trusting to find another at the top of the bank, which, with a little groping, I did. And a minute after that I was knocking upon the sally-port at Newgate, in some trepidation lest the ambuscaders should come up behind me, and take me, before the watch thought fit to open to me.

But they did not; and though he that opened to my knocking at first demurred to my request for admission, yet he fetched up the officer of the guard to me; and he, I promise you, no sooner heard the first words of my story than he had me into the city as quick as I could desire. 'Twas then but ten minutes from ten of the clock, and yet, so smart were our men about their preparations, notwithstanding their weakness, that they were ready for their assailants, and beat them off with great ease.

I know not that any of them were killed, the darkness proving their shield; but Captain O'Neill, coming through into Mr. MacKee's cellar, was taken prisoner, with half a dozen of his men; and that was the end of his mine. As to my Lord Clancarty, he fared scarce so well as upon his former endeavour; for this time he made not up so near to the gate as to knock thereat. But our victory was worth two boats to us; for going down to secure mine, the men that were sent took another little one and a great one, that, I suppose, had fetched across the river the party of men I so nearly fell into the hands of on my way up to Newgate through the Ferry lane.

CHAPTER XLIV.

WHAT BECAME OF THE STRAWBERRIES.

He that hath never ventured greatly and succeeded, how chief a blessedness of life hath he missed! As I waited at my father's door for entrance, methought the buoyant peace which enwrapt me was a kind of foretaste of heaven; for not alone had I accomplished the thing I had set out to do, but God, in His infinite mercy, had made use of my weakness to do another thing whereof I had never dreamed, and that a service to the cause scarce less important than the first.

My welcome was of a piece with my joy. When Margery, opening the door to me, cast her arms about me and rejoiced over me like a mother over her child that hath been lost and is found; when Rosa ran to me, with great eyes full of a joy that was a veil to hide her wanness, and her trembling hot hands that sought my neck; when my father took me in

his arms and bade God bless me before ever he heard how I had sped; 'twas over-payment for ten such days as I had passed. Even now, as I recall it to set it down, the thought of it doth bring back into mine eyes the feeling of the dewy moisture which came to them then, as sweet and as refreshing as dew upon parched flowers in time of drought.

Ay, and there was more to come; for, bending over the children's cots, my gaze awoke first one child and then the other; and, oh, the joy to see me! James was as glad as Roland, and neither could satisfy himself with hugging me. Then came the merriest junketing that heart could wish. We set the children up in bed and fed them with a little of the ripest of the fruit I had brought in—six berries to each, for Margery would allow no more—and a little morsel of the fair white bread that I resolved should be kept for them alone. Margery shook her head at us, as a wise nurse that objected on principle to such midnight revelling; but as for me, in watching their pleasure I clean forgot the siege, with its privations and pains, and tasted some of the purest happiness that ever I knew in my life.

Strange, that after this my dreams should be anything but rosy, being all of my husband chained in hunger and darkness in his prison-

cell; and near him there was always laid a bleeding corpse, the face of which I could never see, but the contours of the form were like those of my brother Wamphray's. I woke from that dream shuddering as I had shuddered the day before when he that was leading me prisoner fell back with a groan and died at my feet.

Golden pieces had been scarce so precious as my strawberries at such a time, and Andrew had given me more than could by any care be kept fit for the children's eating, at the sparing rate it was judged wise to observe. The rest I promised myself the delight of sharing among the elder folk when we should be gathered together at dinner-time. Our commons now were of the scantiest and coarsest; but the bowl of ruddy fruit in the middle of the table transformed our miserable meal into a feast. None of us had ever before seen such strawberries, so great and so well coloured; in the days of our abundance they had been a luxury worth special notice. Judge, therefore, what they now were, when the most ordinary necessaries of life were transformed by dearth into special luxuries.

As I parted them into shares, forgetting no one, there returned upon me that sorry animal appetite that had angered me at myself once or twice the day before, so that my mouth began to

water, as the saying is, at the thought of their flavour and freshness. Partly to thwart this littleness, and partly, I believe, because I was a miser of my pleasures, and would fain enjoy them one by one—first the pleasure of witnessing their enjoyment of their portions, and after that mine own enjoyment of mine—I did not at once begin to eat my share of the fruit; and while I delayed, who should enter to us but Mr. Jedediah Hewson.

None of us, I think, had taken note until that moment of his absence from his usual place. Now, before we were aware, he stood among us—he hungry, we appeased. He would fain—I marked it—have thrust back every sign of appetite; and in truth, I believe that he succeeded to every eye but mine own. But to feel a thing one's self doth make one very keen to detect the same in another; and I marked, because I had just checked, the involuntary motion of the lips and throat, as though he swallowed somewhat. He lifted his eyes; they met mine, that were fixed full upon him. And in that instant of time, many things concerning Mr. Hewson were plain to me that until then I had never divined.

'Here is your share, sir,' said I. And I gave him my plate as I spoke. I say not that under the circumstances it cost me naught; though

sure it was as trifling a service as could be done by one human being for another. But small as it was, 'twas enough to complete the opening of mine eyes to the better side of Mr. Hewson.

He hath a trick of affecting rustic manners at table, as one that contemns trifling observances. It hath often annoyed me, but on this day I scarce could mark it. Next I fell to wondering at this; 'twas as if I could suddenly make allowance for him; and I knew not why. For things were between us exactly as they had ever been: he had no love for me, nor I for him; he had never shown me any friendship—save once, I thought, with a quick flash of recollection. For on the day of the riot he had understood me as none else had done; he had defended me from my father's anger; and I, I remembered with shame, had never thanked him for it. It was true that I had hardly seen him since; but then, a duty delayed is not a duty discharged, and so I spoke to him across the table.

'Sir,' said I, 'I was hindered by my swoon from thanking you, three days ago, for the kindness you showed me, the apprehension you had of my conduct; permit me now to repair my negligence and to express my gratitude.'

He lifted his eyes to mine, dallying the while with his fruit.

'I did no more than my duty to you, and to myself, and to others,' said he; and he spoke not near so gently as I somehow had expected that he should. 'Justice—I did but recall it to the mind of one whom passion had blinded for the moment; how doth that merit your gratitude? And it follows not—remember that—that in other matters I approve of your conduct, or of your spirit, because I once pronounced that you had acted not amiss.'

Surly as ever was Mr. Hewson, and yet I was not angry. On the contrary, that which had dawned upon me before now stood clear before my mind—to wit, that his harshness was a part of his faithfulness to that which he held for truth, part of his loyalty to that which he took for duty. Truth half seen, and duty partially conceived, as I thought them, certainly he was devoted to them after an unswerving fashion. But why had the veil now dropped from mine eyes that had blinded them so long?

Upon a sudden I bethought me that he had been absent from the house the night before—ay, and the night before that, too—the night following that whereon we had been robbed. Since the very hour of the riot, it should seem,

he had begun to withdraw himself from our company, in especial at meal-times. Why was this? I determined to ask him.

'Mr. Hewson,' said I, 'why have you been so little in the house since the day of the riot? We have been wondering at your absence.'

He looked up and coloured; my father looked up too, and spoke:

'Why, girl,' said he, 'there's little need to ask that, I think. Master Hewson hath left us, and very properly, too, say I'—but I thought his voice a little altered as he said it—'for some others that can entertain him more according to his reverence.'

'Nay, sir,' said I, preventing Mr. Hewson's reply, 'his hands and his face tell another story, if you will but look at them.'

'Indeed, Mrs. Hamilton,' said the old man something proudly, 'thy father is right. And I have found me entertainment more fit for my deserts, which are naught.'

At this it was my father's turn to colour.

'I ask your pardon, sir,' said he. 'I was wrong to speak as I did, and should have known you better.'

'Think no more of it, sir,' returned the other.

'And hast thou really quitted the house lest we should feel thy presence burdensome, Mr.

Hewson?' said my father, with contrition. 'Twas handsomely done of thee, and even far too handsome for my liking, between ancient friends, as we are. But is it truly so?'

'There's little grace in forcing the confession,' said Mr. Hewson, on his high horse again in a moment.

'Nay, man, why so tifty?' said Mr. Murray. 'I was about to say that, having held together so long, we will hold together now till the end, an it please you. I like not changes; and one more or less, what doth it matter? Moreover, our diminished store may well prove like that of the Sidonian widow, after the prophet became her lodger, if it be often replenished, as you see it to-day, through God's bounty and my daughter's courage.'

'And herewith, Mr. Hewson,' said I, willing to put that matter aside, 'we do entreat your company at supper—such as it may be.'

'Mary,' said Rosa quickly, 'where's your plate?'

I checked her with a gesture; but Mr. Hewson was quick, and had understood her question.

'Let me understand,' said he, in his authoritative manner, as of one that questioned a suspect. 'Was it your own share, Mistress Mary, that you bestowed on me?'

'If they were, sir, what then?' said I, feeling on a sudden how small a thing it was. 'Credit me,' I said, and it was true, 'I enjoyed them more by far than if I had eaten them.'

And as I said this, I knew that it was because I had denied myself—a very little thing!—for his sake, that now I was in charity with Master Hewson after a sort that I had never been before.

'You enjoyed them more nobly, you would say,' returned he. ''Tis strange, for we have never had much friendship one for the other. Were I but sure, now, that you are a regenerate woman!'

'You would thank me, no doubt,' said I, unable to forbear a smile.

'Nay, that I do now, most heartily,' said he. 'But it is my duty to tell you, madam, that unregenerate virtues are no better than golden vices—ay, and the more pernicious for their glitter. And she that is a vessel of wrath, were she adorned with every virtue and every grace that earth hath ever seen, is but a gracious devil beneath them all.'

Could he but have seen, as I saw, the storm he had raised in one mind, at least, of his auditors! Rosa's eyes flashed so that it verily seemed as though the lamb were about to come to blows with the sheep-dog. My father, too,

though he did not say a word, seemed both astonished and displeased. But to me anger was impossible, because I understood. At last I saw through the man's bearish harshness, and knew that it was but as a rough husk to a noble kernel. And it was not the injustice wherewith he judged me that I saw in his words, so much as the joy, great and glorious as that of the angels of God, wherewith he would welcome me, if by any means he could prevail upon me to accept his doctrines so far as to give him hope of my salvation.

'We may understand each other better by-and-by, sir,' said I. 'Until then I will try to pardon that which is over-blunt in your language towards me, in consideration of its well-meaning.'

Never since then have I fallen back to the contempt and dislike that I formerly entertained for Mr. Hewson. And I have often wondered that the little tiny kindness I did him should have removed a sort of scales from mine eyes that had blinded me to much of his real worth.

Yet so it was; and when I think that it is so, another question springs up in my mind. I wonder if 'tis less because of his loving-kindness toward us that God doth bestow His bounty upon us, making His sun to shine and His rain to fall upon the very worst of us, than because

of His bounty that He is able to look upon us with any kindness. How, but out of His almighty beneficence, could Almighty Goodness endure the like of us, crammed as we are with every kind of littleness and fault? 'Tis sure His care of us that is the root whereon doth flourish the blossom of His love.

CHAPTER XLV.

GATHERING GLOOM.

Even at that moment, had we but known it, the feet of those that brought us sorrow were on the threshold. Before we rose from table there came a man desiring speech of my father. His errand was to ask Mr. Murray to go to Governor Walker, who awaited him at Bishop's Gate. A little wondering, he rose and followed the messenger out of the house, Mr. Hewson bearing him company.

Not a single thought had we of any ill tidings, and it was something else that took us, a few minutes later, to the doorway. Looking forth from it, we saw, turning into the street, one of those companies that by this time we knew so well—eight men bearing trestles, and on the trestles somewhat that lay still.

'Who can it be?' Rosa whispered to me.

'Not Mr. Walker, God be praised!' said I (for the party was coming in the direction of his

house, which was two doors from our own). 'It was he, you know, that sent for my father to come to him.'

Even as I said the words, Mr. Walker came into the street; my father walked beside him, and Mr. Hewson a little behind. Mr. Murray walked as firmly as ever I saw him, accepting no help, nor seeming to need any. He held his head high, and there was a sort of haughtiness in his mien that was new in him; it was not like the carriage of a man heart-broken. For all that, the first glimpse of him told us the whole tale. We needed no longer to ask who it was that lay on the bier; we knew. We stood aside to make way for the bearers before ever they came near us; and it was to our door, sure enough, that they brought their burden, on our threshold that they laid it down. We needed not to ask, either, whether it was a wound, or worse; that which lay on the bier told its own story, though it was all covered with a great standard. This was death. Rosa, my dove-like Rosa, was widowed, and my father bereaved of the son that should have been the stay of his age.

The silken folds of the standard lay richly over the doorsill as they laid him down, and rustled against our feet. Rosa drew back with a low cry. I stooped down—I knew not why—and

stroked the golden fringe as though I loved it; then I laid it in glittering loops upon the poor dead body, above the silk that covered it already.

Mr. Walker made as though he would have said somewhat. The man hath a kindly heart, let them say of him what they please; and it was nothing else than the desire he had to speak comfortable words to us that bereft him of the power to speak any words at all. But Rosa could speak, and did, and that with a gentle dignity and power that astonished me.

'We know what you would say, sir, and we thank you,' said she. 'Ours is in truth a sore loss, but there's scarce a family in Derry that hath not suffered the like. I for one have been prepared for it this long time—ay, ever since the first day of these troubles—and I desire to bear my share in them as—as I should.'

Her voice broke and changed at every second word, but yet it was perfectly clear and distinct; her tears dropped hot, while she spoke, upon my hands that trifled with my brother's gaudy glorious pall. But through them she looked straight and steadily into Mr. Walker's face, about whom there went many a traitorous rumour through the town in those days, that I do believe were as false as lying itself.

'I have some right now,' said she, 'to say to you that have the charge of us: see that we be not defrauded of that for which we have paid so dear.'

'So far as in me lies,' quoth Mr. Walker earnestly, 'I do promise it.' And he spoke to Rosa as to one that had a right to require the pledge he gave; then, bending down, he lifted a fold of the great flag that covered Wamphray's body, guiding our eyes thereto. 'Let it be his shroud,' said he. 'But for him, and for his cousin that lies as low as he, it might be waving over Derry by this time.'

'What!' we cried aghast; 'is Adam dead as well?'

'Not dead,' said Mr. Walker, 'but wounded almost to death. This is the sorest morning's work for the town that has happened yet.'

After he had left us, Mr. Murray went to the room where by this time the weeping women were doing the last offices to his son. Mr. Hewson made as if he would have accompanied him.

'I pray you of your friendship, sir,' said my father to him, 'to leave me to myself for some short space of time.'

Mr. Hewson scanned his face with something of suspicion.

'I trust, sir,' said he, 'that you are not

harbouring rebellion against the decrees of the All-wise ?'

'I trust not, sir,' said Mr. Murray. 'But I shall be better able to tell you when I have settled it with mine own soul.' And so went in and sat alone with his dead, trying it.

I dared not intrude either upon him or upon Rosa, whose face shone through her grief like the prophet's when he came down from the mount; it struck me with a kind of awe that made me understand why the Israelites could no longer bear to look upon him. And so I thought I would go tend the children, since to sit idly down to grieve was nothing at all to the purpose. As yet, though I had seen and handled Wamphray's body, I had no real comprehension of his death. There is, sure, a stunning of the mind as well as of the body, wherein, though we know we are struck, we have no feeling of the blow.

No sooner did I set foot in the nursery than the children (knowing nothing, poor lambs! of what had happened) ran to me asking for more strawberries, and at the word the whole meaning of our loss came sharply and suddenly upon me; the tingling of the blow made itself felt. Strawberries! I minded me of those we had set apart for him scarce an hour before, and at the thought my heart was like to break for him.

Strange, that so small a matter should have power to pierce the heart and to open the floodgates of the eyes! Life and love, goods and gear, a career that promised to be a great one—all these had been in my brother's hand, and of all these the blow that slew him had bereft him. And yet I protest the thought of so many and great losses touched me not half so piercingly as that of a little enjoyment that he had missed, after much privation to make it sweet.

It was at his funeral that Dr. Aicken told me he had hopes of Adam's life; Rosa heard him say it, and looked from one of us to the other with a light of gladness on her face that was near as great a miracle, I thought, as though her dead had risen from the grave where she had just laid him. The woman sat so loose to earth that she could take thought for any of us before herself.

'Why, Mary,' said she to me, as we came into the house, 'I shall be nothing near so long parted from him as you from James already.' And that this was true none that looked at her face could doubt. 'And,' said she, 'take heart, Mary, and hope for the best, for I am sure—as sure as though I saw it—that James will come back to you safe and sound. As I cast the dust upon Wamphray's coffin' ('twas she

herself, indeed, that had sprinkled the first handful) 'I thought of you, and I suddenly felt sure of it.'

And later in the day, when we had been together to see the children abed, she desired that I would promise her one thing.

'It is,' said she, 'that you will be a mother to my son when I am gone.'

Alas! though I promised with all my heart at the time, 'twas but a very few days after that we had reason all too powerful to fear that neither her child nor my own should stand much longer in need of a mother's care. For the languor that had oppressed them so long began to pass into active illness on the day following Wamphray's funeral, and two days after that the doctor pronounced their sickness to be the same pestilence that had ravaged the town—a kind of prison fever from which few that were struck down with it ever arose.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TELLS HOW MRS. HAMILTON ATTENDED A MEETING OF COUNCIL.

All this time no news had come in from the fleet, neither by my messenger nor by any other, so that we were yet in doubt whether Kirke was aware of our extremity. 'Twas true that we had a hope of it that was unknown to most of the other townsfolk; but I know not whether we were not therefore the more to be pitied, since it did but add keenness to the suspense, that was already all too keen. 'Twas a hope as full of pains and fears as any briar of thorns; he that hath a briar to his staff, is he better off than he that hath no staff at all? I doubt it. When the burden of grief and anxiety about the children was added to our other burdens, they made together a load that bade fair to become altogether insupportable.

That any other mother should ever be so hard bestead as we were then, is sure a thing to

hope against and to pray against alike. Our children were sick of a fever, whereof the cure should be nourishing and suitable diet, milk in particular. Now, if we had been willing to pay our heart's blood for milk, there was not a drop of it to be bought at the price. The one thing we had that was wholesome food was a little oatmeal, and that, the doctor told us, was not suitable to their illness. Suitable or not, 'twas the best we had to give them; they had the gruel from it, and the lees were the best of our own food, helped out by such things as could be bought for money in the town, which now were of the last degree of nauseousness. And after a few days there was so little left of the meal, that we would no longer eat any of it, but kept it all for the children, and even so it dwindled at a heartbreaking rate.

Every day my father and Mr. Hewson came both of them to the nursery to ask for the children. So at first did Mrs. Browning; but we besought her to come no more, lest the sickness should prove catching, and so be carried to her own grandchild, and to Thomas Ash's infant daughters, who as yet were well, all three. We never failed to ask, when any came to us, whether there was no news yet from the fleet. Alas! the answer was still No, and No; till I began to fear that Gorman

must have come by some mishap, since I knew him wholly incapable of playing the traitor.

But one morning Mr. Hewson came to us a second time (which till then he had never done), and with a step so brisk and a face so glowing, that of themselves they were enough to proclaim good news.

'Mrs. Hamilton,' said he, 'will you be pleased to come at once to the council-chamber? Your presence is required there, and I am sent to fetch you.'

'But why?' said I, willing to excuse myself, for I had no mind to leave my child.

'The Governors desire it,' quoth he. 'I heard it said that you had saved the town, you and the Irish lad betwixt you. Your messenger is to hand; but, I think, without his credentials; and you are required, no doubt, to speak to his identity.'

I had as little mind to go as ever I had to anything in my life, and was astonished myself thereat. But here was no room to deny my presence, so I was even fain to do as was desired of me.

I had no sooner come within the council-chamber, however, and made my curtsey to the Governors, than I was glad I came. 'Tis true that my knees knocked together where I stood,

but that was mere weakness, not bashfulness. It was so like a dream to me for a moment, that I missed the first question which was put to me by Mr. Walker. 'Twas the sharp voice of Gorman, answering instead of me, that recalled me to myself.

'To be sure, she's Mrs. Hamilton of Cloncally,' said he. ''Tis meself that thought you had some acquaintance with her before this.'

There were some of Mr. Walker's counsellors that could not forbear a smile at this, for his love of the proper forms and ceremonies of a council hath given offence to some that would have the grain without the husk—the business without the formalities. Their smile and Gorman's disrespect were like to have angered Mr. Walker, for he drew down his brows with some asperity. But I made haste to interpose my word, begging his pardon for the inattention that had caused me to miss the question he had put.

'And as to the lad,' I continued, 'I am sure he meant no disrespect, sir; and knowledge of the forms of such a court as this is scarce to be looked for from such as he.'

'Humph!' quoth Mr. Walker, 'nor aught from a sow but a grumph, to be sure. And that's true enough, Mrs. Hamilton, and so I will say no more about it. So perhaps you will now

tell us whether the lad was really the bearer of a message from you to Major-General Kirke; and if so, how you came by speech of him, as well as what the message was; and everything, in a word, that bears upon the matter.'

With that, Colonel Mitchelburne bade place a chair for me. He was wise, poor man, in all the signs of weakness, having newly buried his own lady, as well as I know not how many pretty babes, that the siege was the death of. I know not to this day whether I thanked him for his courtesy, for my eagerness came to a height, and carried me away with it.

'Sir,' I said to Mr. Walker, 'I'll tell you anything and everything you desire to hear from me, and that with a deal of pleasure, if I may but have one thing told first to me.'

'And what is that, Mrs. Hamilton?' said he.

''Tis how my messenger sped with my message,' said I. 'In faith, sir, I believe I scarce could tell you a connected story until I be satisfied of that.'

Mr. Walker looked not best pleased, but yet he gave me to understand that I had leave to put what questions I pleased to the lad. No doubt he thought we were a pair, for our ignorance of the form to be observed in the official presence of high dignitaries such as himself.

'Now, Gorman,' said I, 'don't wait for questions, but begin at the beginning, and tell us the whole story.'

'Faith, my lady, and I will that,' said he briskly. 'Though, to be sure, 'twill all go into a nutshell. Sure, there wasn't the *laste* bit of difficulty in life in getting to Inch for the likes of Gorman, nor yet of coming to speech of the Major-General—none at all. Oh! and never was a gentleman more interested nor more consarned for you. Sure, 'twas the next minute he desired to be out of Lough Swilly, and off to Lough Foyle.'

'Now, God be praised for that!' murmured Mr. Walker, in a very low voice.

But Gorman heard the words, and turned towards him.

'So you would have said, sir, to hear him talk,' said he, speaking every word separate and slowly, like taps upon a drum. 'But 'tis *here* he ought to be, by this time, if he meant it,' he continued, bringing the words out all in one mouthful, as it were. 'For that's a week ago. Ah, sir, it's mighty hard difficulties that lie in the way when the will's wanting.'

At that Colonel Mitchelburne broke in, in his strong, deliberate fashion.

'Boy,' said he, 'take care of your tongue! Is it that Kirke hath no mind to relieve the

city you would have us believe? That, I think, can scarce be the case.'

'And if not,' quoth Mr. Walker, with great sharpness, ''tis a most injurious meaning to put upon delays that doubtless he's as sorry for as ourselves.'

I half feared that Gorman would be daunted by so much heat. Sure, 'twas little I knew him.

'Judge for yourselves, thin,' said he, very coolly. 'The General described to me—for all so simple as I stand before you—the desire he had to come to you by the same way I went to him.'

'What! across the country?' said Colonel Mitchelburne.

'How else?' returned Gorman. '"But," says he to me, "there's Fitzgerald, and Nugent, and Hamilton himself, betwixt Derry and me, and the Duke of Berwick behind us; and 'tis beyond me, so it is." "Dear your Excellency," said I, "'tis none beyond the men of Derry to give them a beatin', *anny* how!" And with that it's to fall to I did, and tell him how you've done it *time and again*. "Fall on them from this side, General," says I, "and let the Derry men fall on them from the other, and it's under your knee you'll have them," says I. "Appoint your time, an' let me take them notice of it, and 'tis ready an' willing they'll be, nivver you fear.

And if you don't sleep in Derry the same night," says I, "my name's not Gorman O'Cahan!" '

'Well planned, ensign!' says Colonel Mitchelburne, laughing. 'And what said his Excellency to that?'

'Made a jest of it, just like your 'anner,' returned Gorman, a little bitterly. 'Now I ax you yourself, sir, was that like a man in earnest?'

'It was not *like* a man in earnest,' quoth the Colonel gravely. 'But, for all that, we must not lightly think evil of the General. Doubtless he hath information that we lack, and doubtless he hath reason good enough for his conduct, which he'll be ready to give us when he hath made his way to us at last.'

But, in spite of his words, 'twas plain to be seen that he assumed more confidence than he felt; and his face, when he thought himself unnoticed, was the face of a man that hath received a blow.

'Then bad's the best of your news, Gorman, according to your reading of it?' said I to the lad, as no one else spoke.

'Not altogether, me lady,' said he, brightening up. 'For wan thing, I heard news of a ship belonging to this place that's expected back daily, with orders from the King himself.'

'What ship's that?' asked Mr. Walker quickly.

'It's meself that doesn't know her name, your 'anner,' said Gorman. 'But at the first, when Kirke came into the Lough six weeks ago, you know, that ship was in the fleet; and 'twas in a mortial taking her captain was—so they told me—when 'twas to quit the river they made up their minds to do. 'Twas so bitter angry he grew at the turning away, that he refused to dally back and forth, like the rest; and they said he sailed off at wance to England, to give the King news of it, and get his mind on the matter.'

'I would stake a round sum,' I said, 'that I know both the name of the ship and of her captain.' And I quivered from head to foot as I said it.

'I, too,' said Mitchelburne—'or, at least, I'd say so, if it was a ship of war he commanded, instead of a merchantman.'

'Ah, but, your 'anner,' said Gorman, ''twas a victualler this ship was, accordin' to what I heard.'

'Then it was Captain Browning,' said the Colonel. 'And Kirke will presently have orders he can't disregard, if Browning went for them.'

'If they do but come in time for us,' quoth Mr. Walker.

'As to that, too,' said Gorman quickly, ''tis meself has something to tell you, that you'll maybe be glad to hear. Wasn't I tellin' your 'anners, whin the lady was sent for, what it was that kept me so long on me irrand? Sure, 'twas a prisoner I was made; and a mortial hard bite that same accident made me ait, too.'

'How was that?' I asked him.

'Indade, thin, lady darlint, 'twas a terrible close searching they were after givin' me the last time I was in their hands,' quoth he. 'But divvle a thing did they find, for all the trouble they took, for the letter was too well hidden for them. But this time 'twas in a hurry I was to be off, and in a hurry they were to dismiss me; an' I could feel it meself, in the band of me breeches. "Well," says I to meself, 'av it's no traces at all, at all, they can find upon you ov dealin's with the city, it's after lettin' you off they'll be, no doubt." So findin' meself left alone for a few minutes, before they took me in front of the Marshal, as they call him, I ripped it out unbeknownst like, and ate it up.'

'Well done, Gorman!' said I.

Indeed, 'twere impossible to lay hands on a better messenger, or a more faithful, than this lad.

'But 'twas a prisoner they made me, and a prisoner they kept me, in spite of me trouble,'

quoth he. 'Nivver till this mornin' did I see the hair of a chance to give thim the slip; an' a plaguey hungry time it was I had of it, I can tell you, an' that's what I started to tell you, when I began. It's starved with hunger and dyin' with pestilence you think you are, here inside the walls; but, faith, it's not much better they are outside, the comfortless creatures! It's to eat the sods out of the peat-stack they're ready to do, for the very hunger; and as to sickness, there's scarce a sound man among the lot that I could see. 'Tisn't fresh men you'll have to match yourselves against, whin it comes to fightin'; an' if you can but hould out a week or two longer, it's to raise the siege they'll have to do. An' troth, it's glad men they'd be, the most of thim, to hear the order—all but the Marshal, that turns his back on one and all of thim, and swears to himself in Rooshian.'

Our Governors looked at each other, and then they looked at me.

'Hold out a week or two!' said Colonel Mitchelburne. 'I wonder——'

'Then ye may save yourself the trouble,' quoth Mr. Walker tartly. 'It hath come to this: the townsfolk must be put on oath about their victual; we must see, since we have this intelligence, what can be mustered up. Two days' subsistence—we shall leave so much—or

three, perhaps, to each family. The rest must be put in the common stock ; and after that——' He looked at me. 'How much could you contribute, Mrs. Hamilton,' quoth he, 'if we did it to-day ?'

'How much ?' said I, and my voice, in spite of myself, was full of bitterness. 'I fear, sir, that we have scarce the two or three days subsistence that you speak of. We go about now buying—what our neighbours buy.'

'Rats, and mice, and offal scarce fit for a dog !' quoth he. 'I know what it is, and am most sorry to think you are brought to such living, for certainly you were most generous with your goods while you had them. Well, 'tis certain that what I say must be done ; for do ye know what kind of trash the garrison is forced to eat ?'

'Truly do I,' I replied. 'I have eaten a siege-pancake myself this very day, and found it none so terribly unsavoury, after all.'

'Hunger,' quoth he, 'is a marvellous sauce. But have you tried salted hides yet ? As sure as I sit in this chair, that's all I have left to give out for rations. Toothsome fare, is it not, for the sick especially ? God send us succour speedily !' quoth he.

'Amen !' said I.

And 'Amen' said all the rest.

'There's Counsellor Ragston,' quoth he, trying to make as though he jested, but both his voice and his eyes belied him—'do you know why he's not with the rest of us to-day? He keeps his chamber because he hath a little more flesh left on his bones than most of us; and he declares that every man he meets eyes him so hungrily that he goes in peril of his life.'

'And for my part,' quoth one of the aldermen, 'I had rather we fell to eating one another than to surrender while there's the smallest hope of relief.'

'Mind, Ensign O'Cahan,' quoth Colonel Mitchelburne, in his commanding way, 'not a word out of doors of aught you have heard in this chamber.'

'True for you, sir,' said Gorman, answering to his new style with a grin. 'Sure, you may trust me.'

'Of that,' said the Colonel, 'we are thoroughly assured.'

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE COST OF CONSTANCY.

Poor little fevered faces! poor little tossing frames! The moment I turned homeward from the council-chamber mine eyes and my heart were full of the picture, and Gorman's questions about his little gentleman did but add poignancy to the thought of their sore sickness. I hastened back to them, with the lad at my heels, for he would not be forbid to follow me.

'For who can tell,' said he, 'but a good romp and a good laugh with Gorman may be the savin' ov thim?'

And though the first was wholly out of question, I did find a feeble hope spring up in my mind that the last might have some good result; and so, being arrived at the house, I brought the lad up to the nursery.

Alas for the game, and alas for the laugh, he was like to have with the children! For

even in the short hour—'twas little more—that I had been absent from his side, a woeful change had passed over my son. He tossed to and fro no longer, being now too weak for it; but as though the fever still tormented him, from time to time he twitched all over. His eyes were neither wholly open nor wholly shut; in them there was no kind of apprehension; neither, when I spoke to him, hoping to rouse him, did any return to them.

Rosa sat by the side of her own son's cot; he was scarce so spent as Roland, but 'twas easy to see that he was on the same rough track. Tears chased each other down her cheeks, and she made no effort to check them. Gorman, too, when he had spoken to Roland again and again without receiving any answer, or effecting any result at all, save a weary turning of the head upon the pillow, fell into a fit of weeping, mixed with loud rasping sobs that it choked one to listen to. I fell into a sort of trembling that was become all too common with me.

'Margery,' said I, 'is this—death?'

'Nay, nay, madam; never give way,' quoth she. 'God forbid that it be aught worse than the natural course of the fever!'

But the tones of her voice and the expression of her face did belie her words, and the next

moment, when Roland, disturbed no doubt by the noise of our voices, brake forth into a babble of words that were all distraught, I could bear it no more, but sent forth in mine own despite a sharp cry that brought them all around me, each vying with the rest to find some comfortable thing to say to me. They might have tried as well to lull the winds with their comfort; the one sound in the world that had any meaning for me was the voice of my child, and the meaning of that was bitter. I cast me down on my knees beside his cot in a kind of ecstasy of grief.

'Oh, Mary,' said Rosa, and she threw herself on her knees beside me, 'is there anything in the world worth this?'

Faith and freedom seemed light in the balance as she put the question;—how should they repay a mother for the sacrifice of her child? I asked of mine own mind what I would do that day if the keys of the city were in my hands. And, looking up, I saw the shadows of both questions—hers and mine—in Gorman's eyes.

Therewith it was borne in upon my mind that the matter was in a sort within my choice. This boy, that now had carried messages three times through the enemy's lines—this boy, that an hour before had been ear-witness of the

confession of our extremity—what might he not do should he think it a service to Roland and to me?

The thought struck me like a blow at first, and after that it steadied me like a draught of wine.

'If there were any pain to bear, that would ease him,' said I. 'If it were my life for his—— But that's nothing. If it were even to continue in this misery——' At that I choked and stopped, for in truth there was not the thing I could have counted a sacrifice, so it did but purchase life and health for my child. 'But oh, Rosa,' I said, when I found my voice again, 'are we the only mothers in Derry that have children at the point of death? How many, do you think, have parted with theirs already? What right have we to hinder them of their requital if a wish would do it? Nay, what was that that you said yourself so gallantly to Mr. Walker when Wamphray lay dead at your feet?'

She made no answer to that, nor did she speak a word for a minute or two. Then she said:

'Your voice is still for "No surrender," then, whatever the cost may be?'

'Both now and till the moment of victory,' said I.

But my voice faltered as I said it, for I

thought that I was speaking Roland's doom. And yet, what praise is there in constancy where there is nothing to endure ?

What constancy we had it in us to show, now was the moment to call it forth. For now began the main struggle of the siege—to Rosa and to me. And though it lasted scarce four days, to set against well-nigh four months, yet even now it seems to me no unequal division to count the days the one half, and the months the other.

Not the least part of our suffering was the knowledge that we could do so little, scarce anything at all. And it was no small addition to it that our good friend Dr. Aicken was so angered by our obstinacy, that he would come no more to see us. And yet, how could we be but obstinate ? When he brought in Master Shennan, the surgeon-barber, with his basin and lancets, the children were fallen too weak to be tormented, and so we told him.

'What!' said he, 'the fever hath them in his clutches, and yet you will deny them the single chance of life that remains to be tried!'

'Will it save them, sir ?' asked Rosa piteously.

'We can but try it,' he returned; and his hesitation gave us all the answer we needed.

'Then,' said she, 'I will not have my child tormented to no purpose.'

'No, nor I neither,' said I.

To that we stuck, spite of all he could say to us; and afterwards he came but seldom to see them.

'What use,' said he, 'since their mothers will not give me leave to do them any good? Certes, my hands are far too full to leave me time to spend on those I can be of no use to!'

Margery and Annot tormented us from time to time, beseeching us to be ruled, and to take some rest. How could we, since the moment we turned our eyes from the faces of our children, we were forced to turn them back again, lest even in that moment there might have been some change? Both my father and Mr. Hewson came to us constantly, and we did not fail to value their kindness as it deserved. But, alas! that, too, was mixed with distraction, since they presently began to urge us to appear, as we had always been wont, at the evening exercise.

'To what purpose, sir?' I asked of Mr. Murray, when he first proposed it. 'Do you think that we could give our minds to the consideration of points of doctrine with our ears upon the stretch for a sound from the nursery?'

'Is it at the moment when the Almighty hath laid His stripes upon you that you cease to cry to Him for mercy?' asked he.

'Nay; but do we ever stop it, day or night?' I replied. 'Must we fall upon our knees for the purpose, do you think?—or will He turn a deaf ear to us if our petition be not made in the presence of all the family?'

'It is the worship that is His due that you would withhold,' quoth he.

'Ah, sir!' said Rosa, 'will there not be time for that when the issue of this sickness hath declared itself, one way or the other?'

With that she began to weep, and he ceased to urge it. But again and again, near every time they came to us, did he and Mr. Hewson revert to the proposal. And on the Friday evening Mr. Murray sent to us, positively requiring the presence of one of us below stairs at the exercise. I went, but found it so impossible to compel my mind to devotion, save when it became in some sort a petition for mercy, that I felt it a mockery to be there. So I told my father, and besought him not to require it of me another time.

'Nay,' said he, 'it will be Rosa's turn to-morrow, and see that you say nothing to her that can turn her against it.'

Neither he nor I knew how sore a time should be to pass between that evening and the next.

In the gray of the morning Rosa slipped all

of a sudden to the floor in a death-like swoon, from which we had much ado to rouse her. Being recovered, and we urging her to take some rest, she did but smile at us, with the old question, 'How can I?' And after that she did so falter in her steps that Margery bade place a table beside her chair, whereon were set ready to her hand, not, alas! all she needed for her child, but all she had to give him. By this time that was nothing more than water and a little gruel, which last had been brought to us fresh made twice a day. And about the hour of sunrise we finished that which had been made for us the day before.

Soon after that, Margery brought in the jug of fresh water from St. Columb's Well. As she set it down, I saw that she shunned to meet mine eye, and a little languid wonder thereat glanced across my mind. At first I thought she was displeased because her advice had been slighted when she would have had Rosa lie down for an hour or two, and Rosa would not. 'But why,' I asked myself, 'doth she visit that on me? Was not I as desirous as she that my sister should take some rest? And was not my counsel slighted as well as hers?'

With that I strove to put the question out of my head as a thing of no importance, one way or the other. But as she still avoided mine

eye, it was not in my power to dismiss it so lightly. Faithful servant as she hath always been, Margery was now far more, since such privations as we had borne together do constitute a bond of very friendship; and it pained me to see her grieved. Sure, it could be no derogation to me, although I was her mistress, to explain anything in our conduct that could have given her pain. I put my hand on hers, therefore, the next time she approached me, and 'Margery,' said I, 'if we could find it in our hearts to leave them, 'twould be in your charge.'

'Sure, I know you can't,' she returned with conviction. 'It wouldn't be in human nature.'

'Then, what hath vexed you?' I asked her. 'For 'tis very plain there's something wrong.'

She answered with a glance at Rosa, and a gesture that told me all.

'*Finished?*' I whispered, with despair at my heart.

'Every grain,' said she. 'And I fear it will be *her* death when we are forced to tell her,' she added, with another stealthy glance at Rosa.

She left me, and I wondered, with a catching of the heart, whether it were better to tell Rosa then or to wait until she asked a certain question that must come ere many minutes; and in the memory of this bitter time, when every hour brought its separate affliction, I think that

these few minutes stand out as the very bitterest and most despairing of them all.

I know not how long she had been absent (but the question I dreaded had not yet been put by Rosa), when Margery opened the door with a certain quickness that spoke of hope; and in her face the same was clearly written, though mixed with an evident doubt. She beckoned to me with her hand, and very surely I needed not to be beckoned twice. I went to her at my quickest pace, and she showed me a beautiful fish, fresh from the river—a fish that weighed a pound at least, by the look of it.

'Where did you get it?' said I. 'Is it—can it be—really for us?'

'Why, that,' says she, faltering, 'I scarce can tell. The man that brought it offered to sell it to me for a handful of meal; he said he would take nothing less. As you know, we have not a grain left; so I came for you, madam; perhaps you yourself, if you ask him——'

'I'll try,' I said; and, taking the fish in my hand, I went to the street-door to see its owner.

'Twas a fish that to-day I should think dear at a farthing. On that day I took a gold piece in my hand, wondering if that would tempt him to part with it, since I had nothing at all of real value that I could offer.

The poor creature was leaning against the

doorpost out of mere feebleness ; and something in that attitude must have recalled him to my mind, for I knew him at once. It was the man to whom I had given the porringer of meal on the day of the riot, when our stores had been robbed. And this gave the answer to a question I was vaguely asking of myself—to wit, Why it was to our door, of all the doors in Derry, that he had brought his fish for sale ?

'I remember you,' I said to him.

'I wonder at it,' said he.

In truth he had reason, for if he had been a ghastly creature ten days ago, ghastly was now no word for what he was. The shape of his skull showed plainly through his features, and the skin was become of so strange a colour, so dark as well as so livid, that he scarce seemed to be a human being any more.

'You will buy my fish, I hope ?' he asked me eagerly.

'It depends upon yourself,' said I ; and I opened my hand and showed him the gold.

'Nay, madam, be merciful,' said he. 'Give me for it but the half of what you gave me that day out of your bounty alone, and the fish is yours.'

'Not a single ounce of food have we in the house,' said I, 'beyond the tallow and starch that hath been bought in the market. If you'll

take this for it, well.' And I held out the gold towards him. 'If not, I have nothing else to offer you.'

'Not an ounce of food in the house,' repeated the man slowly—'not an ounce? Can that be true? But you couldn't tell a lie, I know,' quoth he, with a quick glance at my face, 'Well, madam,' he said, in a hesitating manner, 'I am truly sorry for you, but I can't sell my fish for money. Will *money* keep the life in me?' he ended.

And as he spoke the last words, his voice rose into a kind of cry that was infinitely pitiful.

'It will purchase that which will, at least,' said I.

'Are you sure of that?' asked he. 'Are you sure that there's any starch or tallow left to buy?'

'I think so,' I said. 'I am almost sure of it, indeed; but I can't tell you for certain. But could you not go and try? And I will promise that you shall have your fish back if there's none.'

He looked at me both wistfully and compassionately.

''Tis true that there's no one left to suffer now but myself.'

'Is your child dead, then?' I asked.

'Dead? Ay, three of them,' said he. 'Three of them, and their mother as well. She,' said he, 'went first. Dead! Yes, and shovelled into the pit like dogs.'

He stopped, and his gray face grew grayer at the pain he recalled.

And I had never a word to say to comfort him withal; since, if I bade him bethink himself that they were taken from their misery, were it not as much as to consent that my child should be taken in like manner from his?

'But that was none of your fault,' he said, continuing his train of memory. 'The contrary. You did what you could, and more—far more—than I had deserved at your hands. You gave me what you could ill spare—my fault it was, too, in part, that you could spare it so ill.'

'I wish that it had been enough to save the lives of your children,' said I softly. 'Here, take the money, and see what you can get for it.'

And for the third time I held it out towards him.

But, instead of taking it, he closed my hand upon it, and held it so. 'Twas a strange liberty from a man of his degree to a woman of mine; but at that moment I did not think of it. For was he not my fellow in suffering, and by that fellowship mine equal?

'Madam,' said he, 'it hath grieved me often that I had any hand in robbing you. It grieves me more than ever now, when you say you are brought down as low as the poorest of us. Can you forgive me for the harm I wrought you?'

'Freely,' I replied. 'I have never thought of you—believe it—but as a man driven desperate by sore distress. If I knew not how to feel for it then, sure, I've learnt it by this time.'

'Have you so, do you think?' said he, with a kind of bitter laughter. 'I believe you think so. But *feel for it!* How could you? Can you so much as form a fancy, now, of what it's like to have your children dying—dying of nothing but hunger, lady—and to have nothing—neither bite nor sup—to put in their mouths to save their lives?'

'And isn't that mine own case this very day?' said I. 'What shield have I to thrust betwixt my son and death? or what have I to give him more than you had?'

I could say no more; words failed me altogether. But, in mine own despite, a sound broke from my lips that was the match of his own strange laughter—if laughter it could be that hurt so cruelly.

He pressed my folded hand so hard upon the gold it held that I was nigh to crying out with the pain of it.

'Is it even so?' said he. 'Are you brought down altogether to the same pit as the rest of us? No food, child dying? Tell me, now,'—and his voice shook with a living passion that made me tremble from head to foot—'tell me! They say you are a great lady with the Governors and the council. Why do you not move them to give up the city and save the child? Why not? There may be time yet, if you are speedy.'

'Oh, how dare you!' said I, wrenching my hand out of his. 'How dare you think I could do a thing so base! 'Tis little you know either of your Governors or of me, to put the question.'

'What!' said he, and the keen scrutiny in his eyes was nothing abated, 'are you still for "No surrender," madam, supposing it costs the life of your heart's dearest?'

It was as though he required a pledge of me—a pledge that I must observe to the last jot, should I make it. And who was he, to ask it? Who, but the representative of all the city's hardihood, of all the city's endurance—the very spirit of the city's faithfulness? And the frame that bodied forth that spirit seemed compact of the city's sufferings. The fiery eyes that questioned mine from their hollow caves were filled with these like the stars with light. I bent my

head and answered him ; as though to confirm my promise, I added thereto mine oath.

'Look you,' said I : 'I am but a woman, I can do nothing to help the cause ; but I would not hinder it by so much as a wish. You say I have some influence with the Governors. Supposing that were true, and supposing I could turn them with a word as easily as the wind a weathercock, that word would never be "Yield." While there's the least hope of relief, I'd still say, "No surrender."'

'Then,' said he, 'may God do so to me, and more also, if I take a penny for my fish. I give it to you as freely as you give up your son. And may God take the will for the deed, and spare his life !'

With that he turned from the door, and would have left me without giving me time to utter a word of thanks ; but I followed him and thrust the gold Jacobus into his hand.

''Tis not for payment,' I said. In truth, payment of a gift so nobly made had been a kind of profanation. 'I accept your gift as freely as you make it, and thankfully, too. But, sure, you too will accept a gift that is as free as your own.' For he made as though he would have thrust it back. 'It will buy you that which may keep the life in you.'

'Life !' said he. 'Well, I've seen the day I'd

have done much to preserve that same. But life is precious to us—while 'tis precious to us,' said he; and thereat he laughed again, as strangely as before. 'Is mine worth the saving, now?' asked he.

'Who knows but you may live to see the fruit of all these miseries?' said I. 'If it be not worth saving for yourself, it is always worth saving to give away. This very moment you have perhaps saved two lives that are all the hope of two more.'

And as I turned away, hope in my heart put forth one single tiny olive-leaf.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

A BITTER CHOICE.

In some blind fashion, and sown by I know not what chance word or thought, hope put forth its tiny olive-shoot as I turned to leave our benefactor. But, like Jonah's gourd, it lacked both root and substance to endure the scorching of the sun, and it was withered up and gone long before nightfall. For never yet, sick as the children had been for days, had they suffered as they suffered on this Saturday.

Nothing we could do could give them lasting ease, and yet we durst not pause in our efforts to help them. Like mariners spun round and round on the verge of a whirlpool that may any moment engulf them, who may not for a moment, useless as it seems, cease from their plying of oars and trimming of sails, so were we. The frail little barques were caught in the terrible current; a second's carelessness might give it hold upon them to suck them down. And the

favourable breeze that should save them was long in rising. Frail little barques indeed! and the freight of each was all the hope of his mother's heart. In our unceasing and all but hopeless task, it was little wonder if Rosa forgot both the hour of the exercise and the command she had received to be present.

We were not left long in ignorance of our fault. The daylight lingered yet in the sky when my father came into the sick-chamber, accompanied by Mr. Hewson. Both wore their sternest faces; and Mr. Hewson began to question us in his resonant voice that cannot be ignored.

It caused the children to stir uneasily, in the midst of all their distraught wandering of the wits, and both together we raised our hands and bade him hush. Alas! it was anger, and not caution, that we excited.

'Nay, but you shall listen to me!' quoth he, and not a whit more softly.

His manner, indeed, had a kind of insolence of authority that was both new and galling. That and his carelessness of the children together moved in me a kind of fury. I opened the door of the room, and motioned them out. They appeared to demur, Mr. Hewson especially; but, certes, there is at times a touch of my father in me, and they could not help but

yield to my will. They followed me out of the nursery, and I shut the door behind us.

'Now,' said I, 'I am ready to listen to you, if you will speak softly—not otherwise. Remember that to disturb the children may be their death!'

He began to launch forth into a homily upon my ill-behaviour and deservings. I stopped him with a gesture.

'I am as bad as you say, sir,' said I. 'Take that for granted, and come to the point. For every moment I am absent from my son at this crisis is an agony to me and a danger to him.'

My father laid his hand heavily upon my shoulder.

'You thought otherwise this morning, it should seem,' said he severely. 'Doubtless you suppose us ignorant of the long interview you had——'

'But for which,' I interrupted, 'he had been dead ere this. Nay, sir, be pleased to hear the story of that from someone else or at another time, and come to what you deem it necessary to say, I beseech you.'

'It is this, then,' said Mr. Hewson. I cannot describe the impatience I felt to find him thrust in his word again and again between my father and me. 'We are not ignorant of your impiety, Mrs. Hamilton, nor of the presump-

tion wherewith you will ever choose your own path instead of following that which wiser heads would have you walk in. You have chosen to withdraw yourself from the service of your God ever since He hath touched you with His rod —nay, never deny it ; 'tis nothing but rebellion against His chastening, and that at the very moment when you ought most humbly to bow yourself to it and confess its justice. Your father hath now determined, in his wisdom, that whilst you remain in his house you shall no longer neglect the service of God.'

'Nay, nay, sir,' said I, turning to my father; 'is not His work His service?—or can any duty of worship come before care of the lives that He hath given us charge of?'

My imperious mood was over, and I was fallen to pleading. They heeded it less than the other.

'Is it beyond His power, think you, to have a care of them while you are absent?' quoth my father sternly.

'Say, rather,' broke in Mr. Hewson once more, 'hath it not been the error of the city from the first, to endeavour that by our own strength which God had doubtless effected by His had we left it in His hand? Is not that the sin that hath brought this heavy chastisement upon us? 'Tis nothing but the tolerance

that hath been shown to those that have never taken the Covenant that hath delayed our salvation. Had every one of them been forbidden to draw sword in our defence (as from the first I urged), no doubt but the Lord of Hosts, to whom it is as easy to save by few as by many, had owned our cause ere now in giving us the victory.'

'You are right, sir, I believe and confess,' quoth Mr. Murray. 'And it is an error,' he continued, turning to me, 'that I will not permit scope to in my house. I would not be too sudden with you, knowing the hardness of the natural heart; but if you do not appear at the exercise to-morrow evening—being the evening of the Lord's Day—you shall leave my house next morning, and I will never look at you nor speak to you again. Mr. Hewson is right—I have been too lax with you. I will be so no longer. You shall do the thing which is right, or else I will renounce you as my daughter.'

'Twas a cruel sentence, and I thought not fit either to protest—which had been as useless as to blow against the wind—or to refuse. I was turning back into the sick-room, when Mr. Hewson spoke to my father.

'Mrs. Murray had best hear it now as well, had she not?' quoth he to my father.

I turned back upon them, with my hand upon the latch.

'It cannot be,' said I, 'that you are about to require the same thing of Rosa?'

'Assuredly we are,' quoth he, 'and wherefore not, since it is the duty of one of you as much as the other?'

'Not both at the same time, surely?' I said, amazed.

'Nay, but certainly,' he replied. ''Tis borne in upon me that the city's sin is the sin of faithlessness; and in one house, at least, the Most High shall see confidence shown in His power. Send Rosa to me, since I may not open my mouth in the room.'

'Do me one favour, sir,' said I. 'Let me tell her this myself.'

'Will you do it? and that without trying to influence her?' asked my father searchingly.

'Can she if she would?' asked Mr. Hewson.

'I both can and will, if you will trust me,' said I.

For I knew that I could a little break the harshness of the order in the telling; shocking as it must be, however conveyed, it would come, I knew, less shockingly from my lips than from theirs; and to my thankfulness, my father gave me leave to be his mouthpiece.

I stood for a moment at the closed door,

gathering my wits together and watching Mr. Murray and Mr. Hewson as they turned away. My father tottered at the stair-head, and caught his companion's arm to steady himself. Fasting had greatly broken his strength, but it was not altogether that. The duty (as he thought it) that was like to cost his children so dear, it was no little thing to himself to enforce. At the time I scarce marked it, being half enraged and half stupefied at his severity ; but I thought of it later.

'Will she do it, think you?' asked Mr. Hewson, as they set foot on the landing beneath us.

'My daughter, sir, hath at least the pagan virtue of truth,' returned Mr. Murray a little angrily.

I told Rosa—that same pagan virtue compelling me—every word they had said, without a word of commentary of mine own. She took it with greater composure than I looked for, and then I thought I had my reward for my promise.

'What are you going to do, Mary?' she asked me after a time.

'My dear,' said I, 'how can I tell you, since I have promised to say nothing that can influence you in your decision?'

She smiled very faintly, but for all its

shadowy cloudiness her smile was not devoid of mirth.

'Ever the same old Mary,' said she. 'As if your doings could not fail to determine mine! My dear,' she continued, after a little pause, 'this is a matter wherein each of us must judge for herself; there's no escape. No, it's not for guidance; but I own I'd like to know what you mean to do.'

'Then, I am sure you have no need to ask,' said I. 'But I am grown such a coward, Rosa, that I'd give almost anything to avoid the necessity of angering my father.'

Many a time during that weary night it seemed, indeed, as though there should after all be no clashing of duties. So spent were the children that it seemed scarce possible they should live through another day. But towards the morning I thought I perceived a change that was not for the worse. Surely there was a lifting of the cloud upon the eyes; surely the skin was scarce so burning hot, nor the lips so parched. I was about to point it out to Rosa, when I saw that she was fallen upon her knees beside her son's cot. There was a lassitude about her posture that made me fear she had swooned again, and I approached her with a low cry. But she put forth her hand and motioned me back, and upon that I knew

what ailed her. It was in perplexity of spirit she had cast herself down so helplessly; it was for light she was wrestling. I bent my head and joined my prayers to hers that she might find the things she sought.

The next moment my glance was drawn away from her kneeling form by a ray that sparkled through the window, and looking out, I saw again that glorious star that had so heartened me upon another tempestuous morning. This time also it shone among wreaths of sun-gilt cloud, and this time also it sent a ray of light into the mind as well as the eye. Should I chafe at her pain if the way to life lay through it?

That I ought not, I knew very well. Alas! 'tis one thing to perceive the right temper, and another thing altogether to have it.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE LAST SUNDAY.

Pure and softly dawned the Sabbath morning over the ruined city. 'Tis a marvellous thought, indeed, how small a distance the din of our noisiest fighting, or the dust of our stormiest, doth reach. The sky bent as blue and as mild above us as though there were never a thought in the world but of peace. Not upon the city's founding could the sun have shone more sweetly. But what a wreck of a town it was that lay beneath his rays! Scarce a house in it but was like to tumble down about the ears of the wretched scarecrows that went out and in; not a street but was ploughed up to the likeness of a field ready to be sowed. Ruined as it was, however, it was as much our own as on the day of the closing of the gates; and the walls were the only thing in the place that were as strong as ever, except the people's hearts.

Hour by hour the morning wore away, and with every hour the change in the condition of the children became more evident. Certainly they were quieter—certainly they seemed to be dropping into a natural slumber, far different from the fevered and tormented doze in which the last four days had passed; but hope was grown so great a stranger to our minds that we could not quite dismiss fear to make room for the more welcome occupant. Our hearts would still misgive us, lest this good quietness and rest should be nothing but the beginning of the end.

Towards ten o'clock we had a visitor (of whom it were hard to say whether he were more unexpected or more welcome) in the person of Dr. Aicken, who had never been near us since the day we forbade him to let blood from the children.

'I am but a messenger,' said he, as he came into the room.

But we did so beseech him to look at the children and tell us what we should think of their state that he was fain to pardon us for our obstinacy and do as we desired. He touched them with that nicety of care that it seemed as though he feared they should come to pieces under his hands; then he led us to the furthest window, and spoke to us there in a whisper.

'They're at the turn,' said he. 'I think they are falling asleep, and if you can preserve them from disturbance, they may do well yet; 'tis little less than a miracle if they do. I'll look at them again when I am rid of my message.'

With that he pulled a parcel from his pocket, and began to unwrap it. Judge of our surprise when it proved to be a little piece of beef!

'From my Lord Netterville,' said he—'part of an unexpected ration that came to him yesterday.'

'But why has he sent it to us?' I inquired.

'He has often been making inquiry about you,' said the doctor, 'wondering, doubtless, why you never went to see him; and he was much distressed to hear of the children's illness. I think, too, that he was casting about for some means of showing his gratitude to you for your many kindnesses.'

'And so he sent us this,' said I. 'I protest that nothing I ever did for him was worth the half of it, for it will be of use to them, will it not?' And with that I pointed to the cots.

'Yes; the broth of it, once or twice perhaps,' said the doctor, 'if they wake, as I hope they will, clear of the fever. What have you to give them when this is spent—brandy? good wine?'

'Nothing at all,' we were forced to answer him.

He went on tip-toe across the room, and looked long and carefully at the children.

'I think they are going to do well,' said he, after his scrutiny. 'Keep up your hearts; since the immediate need is provided for, why doubt but that the next will be supplied in its turn? There must, sure, be *some* wine in the town that may be procured for money—if one knew now but the likeliest place to look for it,' he ended, in a musing tone of voice.

Presently after that he took his leave, giving us over again the two strait charges, to preserve the patients by all means from disturbance, and to have strong broth ready to give them the moment they woke of themselves. Our hearts began forthwith to ring the changes from gratitude to anxious care and back again. Supposing their feet to be once planted on the road to recovery, where should we get the nourishing food that would be needed to confirm them therein, more especially in its first steep steps? 'Twas very well for him to bid us keep up our hearts, but, like many another thing that wisdom would advise, it was easier said than done.

In spite of that perplexity, gratitude had far the upper hand as we stood together watching

them, noting how from minute to minute their sleep grew sounder and their breathing quieter.

Rosa clung to my shoulder, hiding her face beside my cheek, and by some sympathetic insight I had warning that it was not merely thankfulness which kept her clinging there. She had something to say to me; I partly guessed what it should be by her hesitancy; and thinking to help her in her difficulty, I put the question.

'You are longing to tell me that you've made up your mind about—my father's command—are you not?' I whispered.

Her 'Yes' was so very faint and tremulous that there was no need to ask what her determination was; in truth, her hesitation had told me already, and I said so.

'Do you think me a very paltry traitor, Mary,' she asked, for answer, 'to desert you in the hour of our common trouble?'

'Still the same old Rosa!' said I, borrowing her saying of the evening before. 'I did not think I was so masterful that you should suppose me unable to understand how friends may be of different minds.'

'Now you are angry,' said she, looking piteously into my face.

'Angry? No, indeed,' I said. 'Perhaps a

little grieved to find that you do not know me better.' And with that I drew her to my side again, and kissed her.

We were both as weak as water, and at my kiss a tear or two gathered in Rosa's eyes and trickled down her cheeks. She took no heed of them, but looked me in the eyes in spite of them, straight and tenderly. It brought me in mind of her behaviour on the day of Wamphray's death.

'Mary,' said she, and face and voice together were persuasion itself, 'dear, dearest Mary, see what a great mercy God hath granted us in giving us back our children's lives! At least, it seems very likely that He hath given them back to us.' With that her eyes rested lovingly upon their faces, and mine did follow them. 'Sure, some extraordinary expression of our gratitude is no more than our plain duty,' said she. ''Tis a miracle that hath been wrought for us, as the doctor told us;—no less.' Then all of a sudden she came to the point. 'Dear Mary, could not you show yours by putting aside your own will for once, and complying with your father's desire?'

I put mine arm around her, and held her close—my dear, dear sister, and dearer now than ever, since 'twas no light thing for her to speak to me with any plainness of censure.

And with her heart beating against mine arm, I reviewed mine own decision, to try if I could think I had misconceived my duty, or could find any loophole of escape from its compulsion. But more than ever did it seem the chief of it to be with my child at the critical moment; to watch for that, lest by any oversight I should miss it; to make sure that nothing was neglected which was expedient to be done. And yet—who could tell?—the critical moment might by the evening be happily past. Or my father might be disposed, if the thing were wisely represented to him, to allow us a substitute we could trust—Margery, say, or Annot. I would do what in me lay, and so I promised to my sister.

Accordingly, when Margery came to us next, I sent her to desire that Mr. Murray would speak with us—for on this morning he had never come near us—and put the thing before him as persuasively as I could.

At first I thought he would have let himself be prevailed upon, for he put his hand to his head and mused awhile. And when he spoke his voice was so gentle that I could scarce credit the sternness of his determination.

'You mistake my meaning, and that utterly,' said he. 'It is not to break down your will that I desire, but to make it evident that faith in God's almighty power and goodness is not

utterly dead in the city—no, nor yet His acceptable worship according to His revealed will. How should this be attained, if when you left your children you set another to watch them in your place? Or why should you fear to leave them in that care alone that is the sole security of any life in the world?'

'It's all the same to me,' I answered sadly, 'as if a sentinel should plead his confidence in his general in excuse for deserting the post he hath been set to watch.'

After that I said no more to Rosa, nor she to me, about the matter. For, indeed, there was nothing more to be said. *My* course, at least, was plain.

Scarce had Mr. Murray turned his back, when there broke out a noise of distant firing of great guns. 'Twas a thing we were very well accustomed to, and was wont to be followed shortly by the noise of firing near at hand. And that—the thought flashed instantly across our minds—would be a danger to the children, because it was nigh certain to wake them up. We made haste to close the windows, and shutter the under part; the upper we could not, since never a candle had we to light the sick-room withal. Tallow was grown far too precious to be burnt. Quick as we were with our shuttering, the streets were already beginning to be

filled with people hurrying to the walls—people whose faces were drawn and wild with an eagerness that was keen to very torture. What could it mean? we asked each other, pausing in our task the while. What could it mean save one thing? And the firing, too, came from the direction of the Lough.

'Best not to think of it,' we cautioned each other, 'lest it prove, after all, no more than a fresh attack from a new quarter.'

But, in spite of prudence, Rosa's eyes began to glisten with anxiety—the match of that which deformed the townsfolk's faces—and mine did burn in their sockets like live coals.

Hotter and hotter grew the distant firing, and next it was succeeded by a long and sickening pause. Margery, who had been slipping in and out all morning as quietly as any cat, came in now somewhat abruptly, so that I reproved her.

'Oh, madam,' said she, in a choking whisper, 'the ships!—the ships at last! They are at Culmore; they're about to attempt the passage of the river.'

'Twas confirmation of our hopes—if that be rightly called hope which hath more than the torment of fear. But what should cause the silence that now prevailed?

Even as we wondered, the noise of firing

broke out afresh, nearer to the city than at first, and louder. The children seemed to stir at the sound, and therefore I bade muffle every chink and cranny, if perhaps we might preserve them from disturbance. But, muffle as we might, we could not shut out the rattling and shaking of the volleys, nor the wild shouting that accompanied them. And these were noises that did set my heart thrumming in mine ears, and my joints loose from each other, as though I had the palsy. Rosa was worse than I, for again she swooned quite away; and being recovered from that with no little difficulty, she fell into a fit of sobbing and crying that was near as painful and exhausting. Neither hunger nor weariness had so broken us down as this first glimpse of authentic hope.

'Twas bootless to warn ourselves and each other that they might fail. We knew it well. But for all that we sat trembling and quivering with expectancy, after a fashion that drained the strength as a wound doth drain the blood. And through all the distant riot the children slept motionless and peacefully.

After a time the firing ceased altogether, the shouting died away, there ensued a silence like that of midnight. We listened long, expecting it to recommence as before; but it did not. And then we fell into a calenture of wondering

what the silence meant. A successful attempt had assuredly been greeted with shouts (however hoarse and weak) of acclamation; a repulse had as certainly excited wailing so keen that some sound of it must have penetrated to our ears. How could we interpret this silence following the noise of battle? Never a soul seemed like to come near us again to tell us.

Presently the children stirred in their cots, as though toward their waking, and then they quieted again. We were bending over them with every nerve upon the stretch, when Margery came to summon us to the exercise. Her eyes seemed starting from her head, and her face was of a livid grayness that was awful to look at.

'How we are to sit through it, madam, sure I know not!' quoth she. 'For I can't hear anything at the windows below; there's not a soul passing to ask news of; and the master hath straitly forbidden us to go out and seek it. Whether the ships be taken or be at the quay, I know not.'

'Nay, now, Margery,' quoth Rosa, 'never fear but you'll know all that in good time. But oh, Mary!' she cried, 'how am I to sit through it, not knowing whether my son needs me or not?'

'What you would do for him yourself,' I said

to her, 'I'll do. Do not fret, dear Rosa; sure, you can leave him in my charge without fear.'

'But I shall not know,' said she, 'whether he wakes to life or to death.'

'Must you go down?' said I, unable to keep silence any more. 'Sure, you'll never be able to force your mind to prayer, amidst so many and strong distractions.'

'There you are mistaken indeed,' quoth she. 'It's in prayer, and prayer alone, that I shall find strength and patience to do my duty.'

With that she gave me one kiss, and turned away. But so spent was she, that she could scarce set one foot before another; so that Margery had to support her, as though she had been a very aged woman. My whole soul melted with pity for her. To me it appeared a rendering of adulation instead of obedience—this duty, as they deemed it, of service to God. I thought it a turning of the back upon the service He had appointed us to. And I scarce could govern mine indignation at the thought that such hard service had been required of her, until I remembered that her whole mind had consented thereto. After that I found myself murmuring words that now came easily and often to my lips:

'O sanctâ simplicitas!'

CHAPTER L.

LIFE, AND TRUTH, AND VICTORY.

And now again the streets began to echo to the steps and voices of passers-by — steps that surely went brisker and stronger than an hour or two before; voices that had a sound of triumph beneath their husky feebleness. Were we saved indeed? I began to quiver at the thought, and longed to throw up the window and inquire; but that, of course, was out of the question.

The noise of the voices in the room below jarred upon me sorely. 'Twas, sure, a kind of devotion that went beside the mark, as if, when Moses bade the children of Israel to 'stand still and see the salvation of God,' some of them had closed their eyes and betaken them to their individual prayers. And yet to do as they were doing was costing some of them dear.

Some of them? I thought next—nay, not

some, but all of them. None of them could close their ears to the passing steps, the voices —perhaps even they could hear the very words. Not one of them but had rejoiced to be out among his fellow-citizens had they but been able to think it right. My father, too—it would be no light thing for him to turn me from his house with my child at the risk of that child's life, perhaps the sacrifice thereof. But that he would be as sharp as his word, I knew, alas! too well. I wished truly that it had been possible for me to avoid opposing him; but even as the thought traversed my mind I had cause to give thanks to God that I had done as I had done.

For there came a sound of stirring from Roland's cot that deafened mine ears to all the others—ay, and would have done so had Roaring Meg herself been adding her voice to the din. I went to him as quick and as softly as ever I could, and was in time to see his sweet eyes open. He looked up at me with a faint smile; he knew me again. I never so much as cast a thought to Derry and its fate for a minute or two after that. Nor shall I ever forget the pleasure—keen even to tears—that it gave me to feed him with the broth which had been waiting his wakening for hours, and which I had not had to give him except for the bounty

of an enemy. The child had no sooner swallowed it than he slipped off to sleep again with one whispered word upon his lips that went near to break my heart with gratitude.

After that I wished that James would continue to sleep until his mother should be by his side, grudging at the thought that she should be deprived of so sweet a pleasure. But a minute or two later he woke with a little cry that startled me ; Roland's waking had been so peaceful. But his eyes were as sane as his cousin's, and his skin as moist and cool ; and I soothed him and fed him with equal tenderness. After that I was calming him to sleep again, when of a sudden he opened his eyes and cried out for his mother—a faint little cry, indeed, that I thought could scarce have been heard by any that was not bending over him as I was. But who can tell how keen are a mother's senses ?

I looked him in the eyes, and told him she should come to him anon, and he was quieted and went to sleep ; but I was troubled in mind, thinking his awaking less favourable than Roland's. But ever as he slept he grew the quieter ; till, as the time wore on for the exercise to be finished, there was not a pin to choose between the sleep of the two children for restfulness.

And now, my mind being turned that way, my attention centred itself every minute more intensely on the voices in the room below, and it did verily seem to me that Mr. Hewson was never like to bring his exhortation—or his supplication, which was it?—to an end. Weary as I was, my chafing would not let me be still; and I went to and fro in the room marvelling at him and grieving for Rosa. Sure, what had he to do to torment her? Was it the man's natural perversity that made him keep them twice as long as usual, because he knew that every soul of them was longing to be free? I had begun to think better of him, and I felt disappointed.

All of a sudden—my pain for Rosa, I think, being my teacher—I understood. It was his duty, or so he thought it. In this house alone were to be found the five righteous persons that should avert the wrath of God from the reprobate city. Doubtless he felt himself another Abraham, able by his prayers to move the Almighty to repeal its sentence. 'O sanctâ simplicitas!' I thought again, with a mood of mind that balanced itself between tears and laughter.

At last, at last, I heard the door open in the room below, but softly even to stealth. Then, sure enough, came steps upon the stair; but

when I hastened to meet the new-comer, it was not Rosa, but Margery.

'What hinders her? What keeps her from her child?' said I impatiently, when Margery had seen and gloated over the children.

'I know not, madam,' replied she. 'She was still on her knees when I quitted the room. 'Tis true that we went softly, but I did not think she marked Mr. Hewson's amen either.'

It did touch me with awe to think of devotion so absolute and at such a moment; but five minutes later I could find it in my thoughts to blame it, thinking it more than a little heartless. And yet—Rosa heartless? That could hardly be.

A few moments later, and I know not what impatient fretfulness caught at my heart; I could wait no longer for the conclusion of her prayer.

'Go to her,' I said to Margery—'go to her quickly. It is not natural, this delay. Perhaps it is my father that is detaining her. Go to her, and tell her that her son lives, and is like to live; and bring her to him; quickly, good Margery.'

She went as I had bidden her, but presently returned alone.

'She hath not risen from her knees,' said she.

'And, oh, madam, who am I to disturb her? 'Tis a thing I dare not do.'

Fear took hold upon me at her words, and yet I knew not why; my speech went nigh to failing me.

'Look you to the children,' said I to Margery, with a husky voice, and went down the stair as quick as I could for the trembling that had smitten me in every limb.

It was nothing lessened as I came into the room below, though there appeared nothing there to justify it. The twilight was deepening fast, so that Rosa and my father were scarce visible in the dusky room. Mr. Hewson was there no longer. My father was still seated at the table, with his head propped upon his hand like a man sunk in thought. Rosa was on her knees beside a chair; the attitude was scarce the ordinary one, for she had sunk backward very far. Her arms were stretched out straight before her; the hands locked together; the face hidden between the arms. 'Twas a kind of ecstasy—a rapture of supplication. I marvelled no longer that Margery did not dare approach her. Here was nothing frightful, and yet, as I am a living woman, the hair of my flesh crisped itself and stood erect, as though I saw a spirit.

I went softly across the room to my father's

side. He looked at me with reproach in his eyes; he said not a word to me, but only lifted his hand to enjoin silence upon me. But 'twas out of my power to keep silence.

'What is wrong?' I asked him in a whisper. 'Why is she so long upon her knees?'

'I desire you will not disturb her,' said he, whispering also. 'Perhaps it is for you she prays; you have need of it.'

At that I would have left the room as quietly as I had entered it; but there was an oppression at my heart that would not let me, and yet I knew not what I feared. Only I could not bear to leave Rosa without assuring myself that all was well with her; and therefore, disregarding my father's gesture of prohibition, I crossed the room and sank down softly on my knees at her side. That, I thought, could scarce interrupt her devotion; nor did she stir to give me place.

Then at last I ventured to lay my hand upon her arm, and at that touch I knew all, though I strove to think she had but swooned again. Alas! the first sight of the set and rigid face was enough, and not for me alone, but for my father too, who hastened to mine aid when he saw me try to lay her down. He sent forth a cry so terrible that it might well have broken her rest.

'I have killed my daughter—I have killed my daughter!'

Alas! it was too true. The thing she had set herself to do was beyond her strength. Even as the martyrs' flesh was consumed in the fire wherefrom their resolute will forbade it to shrink, so in the ordeal she deemed to be required of her did her enfeebled frame fall away from the unflinching spirit, setting it free.

All the world seemed to reel away from me like a mist, as we tried without avail every means to revive her. My father fell into a fit of trembling and weeping that was infinitely pitiful. And outside the whole city rang with shouting voices that proclaimed our victory. 'Victory and abundance!' they cried. 'Victory! victory and deliverance!'

I stooped and kissed my sister's cheek, bethinking me how bodily feebleness and mother-love had combined in vain to turn her from the path—straight and steep as could be found—she had resolved to tread.

'Victory!' I whispered in the deafened ear—'victory and deliverance!'

Then I rose—to find myself safe within my husband's arm, and sheltered next his heart.

When the first half-conscious moments were past, when the triumphant shouts without

began again to have some significance in mine ears, 'twas not the glory of our victory that was present in my mind, nor even the inestimable gains that were purchased thereby, but the cost of it. For of those that had taken arms so resolutely in defence of faith and freedom, not half, nor near it, remained to rejoice in the good issue. Not half, nor near it! The rest were but the stepping-stones whereon we had crossed the flood. Our salvation had been paid for with many and many a life.

Take but our own family as an instance—and it was no more, for there was scarce a house in Derry but had suffered as sorely. My brother gone in the prime of his manhood; his wife dead of grief and privation in the very moment of the Relief; their son saved by a miracle, like mine own; Adam wounded, and that so sorely that as yet it was impossible to tell whether he would ever rise from the bed of pain and danger on which he was lying; his father's fate unknown, for never since the day of the driving of the Protestants to the walls had we heard a word of his welfare, and we feared the worst. I leant upon my husband's shoulder and thought of all these things. As I thought, mine eyes fell upon my father, and I wondered if there were not another calamity to add to all the rest.

For he knelt motionless, and like to a man stricken senseless, beside Rosa's body.

'My work—my work!' he murmured brokenly. 'I was—to blame.'

The happy tumult in the street passed clean by him. His ears were deaf to the sounds of it; his mind was closed to the thought of it. The bitter pain in his face drew me to his side like a cord. I cast myself on my knees beside him, pressing close to his side, stroking his hands and kissing them, murmuring words of comfort into his ears, that would not listen to nor mark them.

'My work—my work!' he babbled still. 'I should not have forced her—I should not have forced her.'

'Nay, nay, sir; 'twas not you that forced her,' I cried to him; and at that, for the first time, he began to listen to what I said. 'It was not you, but her own conscience, that compelled her to do as she did,' I repeated. 'I know it, for was not I with her all the day? I cannot blame you,' I continued, thankful that I had so learnt to comprehend him as to be able to speak comfort to him. 'I cannot blame you; for well I know that what you did, your own conscience exacted it of you. You had no choice, dearest father; you could not do but as you thought it your duty. I knew that well, all the time.'

'She is right, sir,' said Captain Hamilton, very low but very solemnly. 'You must not blame yourself; for this is the act of the Almighty, and none of yours. He hath dealt very mercifully with Rosa.'

'Mercifully!' repeated my father, looking up with his ghastly face.

'Mercifully—yes, most mercifully,' returned my husband. 'For she is spared the hearing of that which had assuredly broken her heart, had she lived to learn it.'

'It is her brother that is dead, too,' said I.

'Yes,' he answered—'dead in the moment of his triumph. It is to him chiefly that the victory is due; it was his ship that led the squadron that hath gained the city. 'Twas at the moment that his ship, the *Mountjoy*, broke through the boom that he fell, shot through the heart. He paid with his life for the Relief that he hath toiled for weeks to bring about.'

'Are you sure of this?' I asked him.

'Sure? Yes, sure enough,' he replied. 'Wasn't I by his side?—I and poor young Seys, that is wounded, too, though I hope not seriously. 'Twas after the *Mountjoy* grounded, for you shall know that she went not through the boom at the first shock, though she started it all to pieces. The shock sent her aground, and then they thought they had her. But

Browning bade fire a broadside at them. The recoil from that sent her back into the channel; and then she sailed through the breach she had made in the boom, after the *Phœnix*, that had passed it while she was engaged with the Irish. 'Twas at the very moment of passing that one of the Irish marksmen took him off. He fell just at my feet. He was pointing with his sword—so' ('twas the very gesture I remembered so well)—'and the flash of the steel no doubt guided the man's eye as he aimed. Strange, that not a man of us was touched (though the bullets were rattling about our ears like hail) till the work was accomplished. And at that very moment a chance shot—almost the very last they fired, indeed—carried off him that was the soul of the whole enterprise.'

'How was that, I pray you?' said I.

'Why, but for Browning,' said he, 'there had been no Relief to-day, nor ever at all, for aught I can see. He was with Kirke at his first coming; and when nothing would bring him to the point of attempting the river, Browning turned clean about and sailed for England. There he and Cairns sought out Schomberg, saw the King himself, I believe, and returned with a positive command that the relief was to be attempted without delay, whatever the diffi-

culties or the risk. Many a man hath been at Kirke to the same end since Browning sailed, but without effect; but Cairns, that Browning brought over, brought orders that he could no longer disregard.'

'So 'tis to Browning chiefly that this day's success is due?' said I.

'To him more than to all the rest together,' returned Captain Hamilton. 'Leake said so, Rooke said so. But for him they would scarce have had the opportunity to make the attempt. He hath toiled like a hero to gain his end. And oh, Mary! when one recalls the efforts he made to effect the relief of the city, and thinks of his life taken at the very instant when that was assured, hath it not the look of a payment made for the accomplishment of a chosen object?'

'If it were so indeed,' I answered, 'well I know that 'tis a payment he had never grudged. And it is very fit that you have told us of his triumph and his martyrdom—for 'tis that, and no less—here upon the scene of his sister's. Yes, you are right. The Almighty hath dealt very mercifully with them both.' And I stooped and kissed my father's shaking hand, that was but an instrument in the hand of his God.

O sanctâ simplicitas!

Which of the three deserved a poorer meed of praise?

This my narrative hath lain by for months, and to-day I take it up again to add some short account of a scene which completes it with a fitting epilogue.

For our long strife and trial hath now had a further reward than victory; it hath met with recognition from that quarter whence recognition is at once most gracious and most due. The King himself hath been in Derry; a wizen, undistinguished little man, with nothing in his aspect to proclaim him the descendant of a line of illustrious soldiers, and himself the most illustrious of them all. Save when you may meet the glance of his eye—that, however transient, hath the power of the veritable hero's—penetrating at once and steadfast, it doth subdue the will to obedience and the heart to loyal confidence. 'Tis a look I learnt to know two years ago. I recognised it to-day, and shrank not from it, but rejoiced in it.

The King hath been in Derry, and I have seen him; and so hath Captain Hamilton, who now is simple James Hamilton no longer, but hath a handle to his name. Credit me, it was the proudest moment that ever I knew when the King began to tell me, in the hearing of all

my friends, of my husband's faithful services, and his own sense of the same, and in particular of a secret mission to the Low Countries that was entrusted to him in the spring of last year, wherein his discretion and secrecy shone as conspicuous as his fidelity and courage.

'And since I haf learnt from Hamilton,' said the King, in his slow foreign manner of speech, 'that the secrecy he was forced to obserf did cause you much pain, I haf delayed to reward him according to his deserts until I hat the opportunity to do it in your presence.'

With that he desired Captain Hamilton to kneel, and dubbed him knight upon the spot. Judge if I was overpaid for my grief! Judge if I was rebuked for my mistrust of my husband!

His Majesty was gracious indeed to me, but to Mrs. Browning he was gracious and something more. When she bent and kissed his hand, he raised her up and saluted her upon the cheek. Then with his own hands he tied a diamond necklace about her neck, in grateful remembrance, he told her, of her husband's services to him, to his country, and to the Protestant cause throughout the world.

'Services,' said he, 'impossible to be estimated. Hat Derry fallen, no doubt but King

James hat remaindt King of Ireland. France and his friendts in Scotland helping him, it is possible he might haf regained England. And in that case, the Protestant cause had been doubtful, indeed, in Europe. Under God, madam, 'tis greatly to your husband's devotion that its prosperity to-day is due.'

Therewith he clasped the ornament upon her shoulder. And sure, next to the consolation of the knowledge that her husband accomplished that end for which he staked his life and paid it, comes that of the knowledge that his devotion is seen according to its perfectness by one that can esteem it at its proper worth.

What was that he had said to his sister and me, on the day after Captain Hamilton's escape from Cloncally, of his hopes of serving that cause?

'A few more cargoes safely brought to hand —a passenger or a message taken where they be required;—that is the limit of the likelihood.' And, 'If there be greater service appointed for me, doubtless it will find me where I am.'

Why, yes; that was all, indeed. But that cargo brought in, that message carried, the King he loved did now pronounce to have been the pivot whereon did turn the liberty of his country and the triumph of his faith.

Such, and no smaller, was the service he paid.

Well, the dusk is falling, and with the dusk the dew. 'Tis time the children were brought into the house. Even as I form the thought in my mind, I hear their voices replying to Margery's call. They have been about some marvellous delightsome labour, in charge of Joshua Hill, the same man whose fish was, by God's mercy, I nothing doubt, the saving of their lives. He hath been in our employment since the day we returned to Cloncally; a man bereaved and homeless, he hath centred his affection upon the children whom he helped to save. They return it with interest, and their loving prattle doth often beguile him from his sadness. To see them now, one might almost think he had forgotten his own children and their mother, buried under the great green mound in Derry churchyard.

But I know better. When I go to that place, to visit the graves of those whom I loved, and love, but shall not see until my body be laid beside theirs, very oft I take him with me. 'Tis in loving remembrance more than in grieving that we pass our time, as knowing that those we think of have entered into that blessedness which hath neither term

nor limit, and for which their suffering here was no more than a preparation, brief, though sharp. And in the presence of these memories we are equals again, as we were in the streets of Derry—equals in the sorrow that shall erelong be swallowed up in the joy of reunion; equals, too, in the hope that endures, and shall that day be justified.

THE END.

BILLING AND SONS, PRINTERS, GUILDFORD.

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA
3 0112 042251816